

Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind 20

Marcelo D. Boeri · Yasuhira Y. Kanayama  
Jorge Mittelmann *Editors*

# Soul and Mind in Greek Thought. Psychological Issues in Plato and Aristotle

# **Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind**

Volume 20

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Marcelo D. Boeri • Yasuhira Y. Kanayama  
Jorge Mittelmann  
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# Soul and Mind in Greek Thought. Psychological Issues in Plato and Aristotle

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# List of Abbreviations

<i>Adv. Iul.</i>	Galen, <i>Against Julian</i>
<i>APo.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Categories</i>
<i>Chrm.</i>	Plato, <i>Charmides</i>
<i>Cra.</i>	Plato, <i>Cratylus</i>
<i>Cri.</i>	Plato, <i>Crito</i>
<i>de An.</i>	Aristotle, <i>On the Soul</i>
<i>de An.</i>	Alexander of Aphrodisias, <i>de Anima libri Mantissa</i>
<i>EE</i>	Aristotle, <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
<i>EN</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Euthphr.</i>	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>GA</i>	Aristotle, <i>On the Generation of Animals</i>
<i>GC</i>	Aristotle, <i>On the Generation and Corruption</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i>
<i>In de An.</i>	Ps. Philoponus, <i>Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul</i>
<i>In de An.</i>	Ps. Simplicius, <i>Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul</i>
<i>In de An.</i>	Sophonias, <i>Paraphrases on Aristotle's On the Soul</i>
<i>In de An.</i>	Themistius, <i>Paraphrases on Aristotle's On the Soul</i>
<i>In Sens.</i>	Alexander of Aphrodisias, <i>On Aristotle's On sense</i>
<i>Insomn.</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Dreams</i>
<i>Juv.</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death</i>
<i>Leg. Alleg.</i>	Philo, <i>Allegorical Interpretation</i>
<i>Lg.</i>	Plato, <i>Laws</i>
<i>M</i>	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Against the Professors</i>
<i>MA</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Movement of Animals</i>
<i>Metaph.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>PA</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Parts of Animals</i>
<i>Ph.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phlb.</i>	Plato, <i>Philebus</i>
<i>Po.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>

<i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>
<i>QD</i>	Philo, <i>On the Unchangeableness of God</i>
<i>R.</i>	Plato, <i>Republic</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Respiration</i>
<i>Rh.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i>
<i>Sens.</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Sense and Sensibilia</i>
<i>Smp.</i>	Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
<i>Somn. Vig.</i>	Aristotle, <i>On Sleep</i>
<i>Sph.</i>	Plato, <i>Sophist</i>
<i>Top.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Topics</i>
<i>Tht.</i>	Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>



# Chapter 1

## General Introduction



Marcelo D. Boeri and Yasuhira Y. Kanayama

**Abstract** Although philosophy of mind is a hot topic in contemporary philosophy, Ancient theories of the mind are not usually taken into consideration. In this Introduction we briefly focus on some of the reasons why the Ancient conceptions of the mind tend not to be considered seriously any more. We try to account for why it is still reasonable to study some theories that apparently have been overcome by contemporary science of the mind. Although one can grant that Ancient theories of the mind may not be a starting point for a contemporary philosopher of mind, we suggest that the approaches of the Ancient philosophers still provide insights to those who are interested in investigating the mind-body problem. Ancient discussions of the mind, we hold, should not be taken as archeological pieces that can be *easily* neglected. Even though we recognize that some ingredients of Ancient theories *in fact* are ‘archeological’ (especially those elements related to physiological aspects), we hold that their philosophical analysis, inasmuch as it can contribute to clarifying problems that have not been resolved yet, can be dealt with seriously. Finally, this Introduction also describes briefly the contents of this book.

### 1.1 Agreements and Disagreements Between the Ancient Greek ‘Soul’ and the Contemporary ‘Mind’

Philosophy of mind is a hot topic in contemporary philosophy. In the last four or five decades an enormous amount of papers and books, discussing what the mind is, its role in knowledge, action, and so on, have been published. For the most part, those

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papers and books do not mention (even in passing) what the Ancient philosophers used to propose and argue in the field of the mind. An interesting exception is the volume edited by Crane and Patterson (2000). In their introduction the editors start by referring to Aristotle's *De anima* and the contemporary interpretations of him, especially indebted to M.F. Burnyeat, M.C. Nussbaum, H. Putnam, R. Sorabji, among others.<sup>1</sup> Some other essays<sup>2</sup> mention profusely Aristotle as well. But this is so, one might think, because Crane and Patterson just intend to put into context what they call 'the *history* of the mind-body problem in western philosophy' (our italics), while distinguishing three 'general trends of thought, or paradigms': the Aristotelian paradigm, the Cartesian paradigm, and the scientific materialist (or physicalist) paradigm'.<sup>3</sup>

But there are other contemporary voices that are intent on taking into consideration Aristotle in a more constructive and systematic way. Lowe, for example, takes seriously what Aristotle had to say about the active and passive powers<sup>4</sup>; he is a leading figure of the so-called 'Neo-Aristotelianism', an approach associated to a revival of Aristotle in contemporary philosophy that is exploring Aristotle's matter and form as what Lowe calls 'incomplete' entities which are completed by each other in their union in the substance resulting from them.<sup>5</sup> The reconsideration of Aristotle is well-known in ethics and action theory (some distinguished representatives are A. McIntyre, M.C. Nussbaum and P. Foot, among others), but this rebirth of Aristotelianism is also present in the philosophy of science and in metaphysics.<sup>6</sup>

Some reasons might be furnished to explain the absence of Ancient philosophers in the contemporary debate about mind; for the sake of brevity we limit ourselves to mentioning only a few: (i) just as it is the case in contemporary physics that a physicist has no need to begin by considering what Plato or Aristotle said about the natural world, so too in contemporary philosophy of mind no one thinks that Ancient theories are relevant, neither as a starting point nor as a systematic context of discussion.<sup>7</sup> (ii) In this kind of approach, Ancient doctrines of the mind are taken to be archeological pieces that can be neglected by philosophers and cognitive psychologists. (iii) The physiology on which Ancient views of the mind are mostly based is false or outdated, so sometimes the kind of consideration that Ancient thinkers take into account is considered to have nothing to do with what the contemporary empirical science of the mind takes to be the case. (iv) There is an additional problem with the Ancient doctrines, this time focused on an important detail of terminology: contemporary philosophers of mind abandoned, a number of decades ago, the term

<sup>1</sup> Crane and Patterson (eds.) (2000, p. 3, note 8).

<sup>2</sup> Those authored by Langton, Stone, and Patterson (all of them included in Crane and Patterson (eds.) (2000)).

<sup>3</sup> Crane and Patterson (eds.) (2000, p. 2).

<sup>4</sup> Lowe (2008, p. 149, note 8).

<sup>5</sup> Lowe (2013, p. 230).

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the just mentioned works by Lowe, see also Cartwright (1989) and Fine (1994).

<sup>7</sup> Crane and Patterson (eds.) (2000) do not seem to endorse this view, as they appear to take seriously Ancient theories as a reasonable historical antecedent of contemporary theories.

‘soul’ (ψυχή) to make reference to the ‘principle’ allowing and accounting for the psychic life of an individual.

In what follows we shall briefly focus on some of these points; In Sect. 1.2 we intend to justify why Platonic and Aristotelian scholars usually speak of ‘soul’ instead of ‘mind’. We also should like to account for why it is still reasonable to study some theories that apparently have been overcome by contemporary science of the mind. Although one can grant that Ancient theories of the mind cannot be a starting point for a contemporary philosopher of the mind (who probably should be more attentive to what neuroscience says), the approaches of the Ancient philosophers still provide insights to those who are interested in investigating the mind-body relation. Ancient discussions of the mind, we hold, should not be taken as archeological pieces that can be *easily* neglected. Moreover, even though all those ingredients of Ancient theories that *in fact* are ‘archeological’ (especially those elements related to the physiology supported by Plato and Aristotle) can be overlooked, their philosophical analysis, inasmuch as it can contribute to clarifying problems that have not been resolved yet, can be dealt with seriously. To sum up, although we recognize that all the four points listed above (i, ii, iii, and iv) may be reasonable, we contend that Ancient philosophers still have something to say both about the nature of the soul or the mind (its role in knowledge, practical life, etc.) and about the still unresolved issues regarding the soul-mind body relation.

## 1.2 Why ‘Soul’ instead of ‘Mind’?

One of the main reasons why contemporary philosophers of mind talk about mind, not about ‘soul’, surely is that they see a potential danger in speaking of the ‘soul’, due to its theological and ‘transcendent’ implications, which are generally removed from the contemporary materialistic view of the mind. Thus they do not talk about the *soul*-body problem, but about the *mind*-body problem, this way avoiding the potentially misleading view that, when one refers to the ‘item’ that allows processes such as breathing, reproducing, thinking, perceiving, desiring, feeling pain or pleasure, fear, rage or joy, one is speaking of a vital principle going *beyond* the sphere of what is strictly bodily, embedded in the bodily existence of an organism. This being so, the word ‘mind’ would be a more neutral term to describe the psychological experiences just mentioned.

Moreover, Aristotle’s psychological theory implies an additional problem: given that according to him the soul is the principle of *living* beings, plants, like animals (both irrational and rational), turn out to have soul. Interestingly this is a view explicitly rejected by the Stoics, who argue that in each ‘level of reality’ there is a specific aspect of ‘breath’ (πνεῦμα) operating: in stones (pieces of wood, bones, ‘which are similar to stones’) breath is a state/condition or tenor (ἔξις), in plants it is nature (φύσις), and in animals (both irrational and rational) it is soul (ψυχή). Actually, it is the same ‘breath’ in different degrees of tension (cf. Pseudo-Galen,

*Introductio seu medicus* XIV 726.1–14, ed. Kühn = SVF II 716; Philo, *Allegory of the Laws* 2.22–23 = SVF II 458; *God's Immutability* 35–36 = SVF II 458). The Stoics, like Aristotle (*GA* 736a30–b3; *EN* 1102a33–b2) and other philosophers (including Aquinas), considered the human embryo to be a plant for at this stage our existence is determined by nature, not by the soul. Aquinas follows Aristotle's view in ascribing to the human embryo first a nutritive soul, then a perceptual soul, and lastly the intellectual soul (*anima intellectiva*; *Summa Theologica* Quaest. 76a3, 118a2). According to the Stoics, when the embryo is developed, it transforms its nature into soul; at that stage, perception, desire, and impulse appear (Philo, *God's Immutability* 35–45 = SVF II 458; Galen, *Adv. Iul.* XVIII 266, ed. Kühn = SVF II 718). The radical difference between Aristotle and the Stoics is that the latter take the functions of Aristotle's nutritive soul (i.e. growing and metabolic functions in general) to belong not to the soul, but to nature. Although 'nature' also is present in animals (e.g. in their nails and hairs), what the Stoics want to stress is that the soul is not the mark of the animal's vegetative functions, since there are some things (plants, embryos) that have no soul but deploy those functions.<sup>8</sup> However, the Stoics continued to share with Aristotle the important view that the soul is what holds the body together (cf. *de An.* 411b8: ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ σῶμα συνέχειν; for the Stoic evidence see Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* VII 234–236).

Indeed Plato as well as Aristotle, the two central figures in this volume, would agree that 'soul' mainly refers to the 'principle of life', so if the soul is present in the body, it makes it 'a living thing', i.e. it turns such body into the living being it is.<sup>9</sup> Thus it is because of the soul that a body becomes a *living* body, endowed with vital functions (such as breathing, perceiving, thinking, and so forth). When explaining what life is, Aristotle says that it is self-nourishment, growing, and decay (*de An.* 412a14–15); as is clear, this describes the most basic form of life recognized by Aristotle (the 'nutritive or vegetative soul'; τὸ θρεπτικόν),<sup>10</sup> and the soul, the principle or source of living beings (which includes plants, irrational and rational animals), is what guarantees that all that is ensouled is alive, since without soul there is no life. Thus plants (along with animals), insofar as they are living beings, have souls.

It is true that Plato is particularly concerned with arguing that the soul is immortal,<sup>11</sup> thus giving a 'transcendent' character to it. But it is equally certain that Plato, like Aristotle, associates the soul to the principle that allows the most basic vital functions to an organism, such as breathing (see *Cra.* 399d). Moreover, Plato identifies the soul with self-motion, or rather defines soul as a 'motion capable of

<sup>8</sup>For discussion see Annas (1992, p. 54).

<sup>9</sup>Pl. *Phd.* 105c9–d4; Arist. *de An.* 402a6–7.

<sup>10</sup>This is understood as a 'nutritive and reproductive capacity of the soul': ἡ αὐτὴ δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς θρεπτικὴ καὶ γεννητικὴ (*de An.* 416a19).

<sup>11</sup>He supplies several arguments for the claim that the soul continues to live after the physical death (*Phd.* 69e–84b, 102a–107b; *Phdr.* 245c–e, 246a; *R.* 608c5–612a7; *Lg.* 893b–895a). To be sure, Plato acknowledges the existence of the mortal kinds of the soul (the spirited and appetitive kinds) in the *Timaeus* (see 69c–70a; cf. also 61c, 65a, 70d–71a, 72d), but the important point for us is Plato's claim that the soul can continue to exist after the individual's death. This possibility is reserved just to its rational part.

moving itself' (*Lg.* 896a). But he also speaks of the soul as a 'principle or source of movement' (i.e. of other things; 895a2, 896b1–3) and as 'what manages and resides' (διοικοῦσαν καὶ ἐνοικοῦσαν) in absolutely all things that are in motion in any way (896d10–e1). If this is so, the soul also should manage the heaven. Thus, for Plato the cosmos or the universe, inasmuch as it is a living being, should have a soul (*Tim.* 34b–36b, 41d4–5).

Now the soul-body problem goes back to Plato, who not only distinguishes the soul (ψυχή) from the body, but also argues that one's soul is the 'self itself',<sup>12</sup> and that, given that the soul is able to use and rule over the body, the soul is 'more valuable' than the body (see *Alc. I* 129e–130c; *Phd.* 79e8–80a6; *Lg.* 896c1–3).<sup>13</sup> Besides, his view that there are two distinct domains of entities (immaterial and material) suggests the link between his psychological doctrine and the so-called 'classical substance dualism', widely discussed in contemporary philosophy of mind (inspired by Descartes).

We are aware that the term 'dualism' is particularly controversial when applied both to Plato and Aristotle. Some scholars argue that a 'dualistic interpretation' of

<sup>12</sup> This is a more or less usual (and probably wrong) way of rendering the difficult Greek expressions αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, αὐτὸ τ᾽αὐτό (*Alc. I* 130b1, d4). This interpretation surely assumes that in the analogy with the crafts the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό is the self, the soul, or the person. However, as observed by Gill (2006, p.347), the English term 'self' is 'a rather peculiar usage, representing the conversion of a reflexive suffix (as in 'himself') into a noun'. But the Greek αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό doesn't mean a fundamentally reflexive relationship, but 'what is the core or essential feature of the itself' (349). Pradeau (2000, p. 210) proposes 'ce soi-meme lui-meme' as a reasonable rendering of αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, although he warns us that his translation renders a 'redondance pronominale assez inhabituelle'. In the nineteenth century, especially due to the authority of Schleiermacher, the authenticity of this dialogue has been questioned. Some contemporary scholars also forcefully challenge the authenticity of *Alcibiades I*, notably Smith (2004) and, more recently, Renaud and Tarrant (2015), who tend to support the inauthenticity (pp. 38, 46). However, they declare that their purpose is 'to explore the hypothesis that the dialogue *may be* interpreted along the same lines as any other dialogue of Plato' (p. 5). Some other interpreters tend to take *Alc. I* to be authentic (Annas (1983, pp. 114–115), cited by Gill (2006, p. 344). See also Pradeau (2000, pp. 20–29); Denyer (2001, pp. 14–26). Gerson (2003, p.14, note 1) prefers not to take a strong position on the authenticity — both of the *Theages* and the *Alc. I* —, although he tends to *accept* their authenticity).

<sup>13</sup> As observed by Long (2005, p.174), philosophy of mind is a relatively recent discipline 'indelibly coloured by Descartes and the sharp distinction he introduced between the physical and the mental. Inasmuch as Plato discusses such concepts as belief, desire, pleasure, action, and emotion, he can be brought into contact with what we call philosophy of mind. But the mind/body distinction, in the way it has preoccupied modern philosophy, has only partial bearing on the Platonic dualism of body and psyche'. In spite of the differences between Plato and Descartes, both philosophers share the view that the soul has a nature such that it will continue to live after death (i.e. independently of the body). But, of course, there are important differences between them as well: in its most technical use, soul appears to be distinguished from mind by Descartes, the former being able to animate the body, and the latter being responsible for intuiting, thinking, and imagining. Descartes usually employs the expression *l'esprit* and *mens* when making reference to mind as something different from the body. By contrast, *l'âme* and *anima* designate the mind in its union with the body. On the difficulties concerning the word 'mind' to understand Plato's psyche cf. Griswold (1996, pp. 2–3). Besides, in Modern philosophy (maybe due to Descartes' influence) the starting-point of inquiry is the mind's consciousness of itself. For a full discussion of these distinctions see Broadie (2001).

Plato prevails largely due to Aristotle's critique to the separation between Forms and perceptible things. Thus Plato is taken to be an 'idealist' because he has invented 'the theory of Ideas', and a 'dualist' because he has separated 'the world of Forms' from the 'world of becoming', the body from the soul, and so on. But as is clear, the term 'dualism' can also refer to the distinction between 'ways of being' (the eternal and what comes into being).<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, both Plato and Aristotle can be regarded 'dualists'. This being the case (and we think it is), there is no doubt that, when 'separating' the soul from the body (i.e. when establishing an *ontological* distinction between body and soul), Plato qualifies as a dualist. Maybe all depends on the way in which the notion of 'dualism' is taken.<sup>15</sup> Some other scholars propose to understand the distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible domain in terms of a 'metaphysics of relations', as a 'relational dualism' and as a 'differentiated monism'.<sup>16</sup> This view had already been (partially) advanced by Fattal,<sup>17</sup> who has forcefully argued that Plato, having noticed 'very quickly' the difficulties raised by his theory of separate Forms, tried to solve immediately the problem through a 'philosophy of relation' in order to safeguard the unity and cohesion of the real. If Fattal is right (and probably he is), Plato *did* envisage a difficulty in drawing a sharp distinction between the immaterial and the material.

In contemporary philosophy 'dualism' means many things ('interactionist dualism', 'property dualism', 'substance dualism', 'type dualism', and so on); but when the word is employed in the basic technical sense in which it is used in the contemporary philosophy of mind,<sup>18</sup> the term 'dualism' is not so dramatic even if we ascribe some form of dualism to Ancient philosophers. Both Plato and Aristotle acknowledge that soul and body are two different kinds of thing, even though neither Plato nor Aristotle would say that soul and body are 'substances' in the sense of the composite or the individual.

Furthermore, Plato, unlike contemporary philosophers of mind, is willing to ascribe 'evaluative' predicates to the soul (in fact, one's soul can be 'perverse', *R.* 409a, 610a; 'excellent', *Criti.* 112e; 'small and warped', *Th.* 173a; 'clean or polluted', *Lg.* 716e). For contemporary philosophers of mind it would be weird (or even absurd) to claim that one's mind is 'perverse' or 'polluted'. It is entirely understandable, on the other hand, that Plato scholars have reason to reject an assimilation or even a comparison of the Platonic *ψυχή* to contemporary 'mind': when Plato speaks of the soul, he is not only talking about a 'psychological power' or about the 'mental states' related to it, but also about an entity that determines the moral qual-

<sup>14</sup> See Bossi (2015, pp. 45–46).

<sup>15</sup> Fronterotta (2015, p. 111).

<sup>16</sup> Candiotto (2015a, b, pp. 82–89).

<sup>17</sup> Fattal (2013, pp. 17ff.).

<sup>18</sup> See Beakley and Ludlow (eds.) (2006, p.3): 'the doctrine that there are two different types of substance, physical substance, which is the object of the natural science, and mental substance, which is the stuff of which our conscious states are comprised'; Watson (1999, p. 244): 'the view that reality consists of two disparate parts'. In other words, we use the term 'dualism' to connote the number of *kinds* of substances that there are (see Crane (2001, p. 36)).

ity of a person (the person being his soul), a quality on which the actual actions of such a person depend.<sup>19</sup> This is not a minor difference, and should not be overlooked. But we believe that Plato's treatment of ψυχή allows such a wider analysis (at least in some contexts) as to indicate some crudeness in the examination of the soul (or mind) by contemporary philosophers.

### 1.3 Why Ancient Views?

In some respects the Aristotelian landscape is not completely different from the Platonic one. Nowadays mind-body dualism is usually attributed to Descartes; sometimes it is argued that this view gives rise to the still famous and difficult problem of mind-body interaction (a problem discussed also by Plato and Aristotle): for example, if mind and body are two so different entities, how is it possible for the mind to make our limbs move?<sup>20</sup> Descartes served as an inspiration to those contemporary interpreters of Aristotelian psychology who think that a contrast between Aristotle and Descartes can and should be stated, as well as to those contemporary philosophers of mind who regarded Descartes as a model of substance dualism, a view that, according to them, must be rejected or at least seriously to be questioned.

Aristotle has also been especially attractive to those scholars who were interested in showing that an Ancient philosopher can be brought into discussion with contemporary philosophy.<sup>21</sup> A philosopher of mind, such as H. Putnam, felt 'pleasantly surprised' to find that his 'view was *substantially the same* as Aristotle's, although stated a bit more precisely with the aid of the vocabulary of contemporary scientific methodology and cybernetics'.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Aristotle's research on the soul addresses some topics that are more or less common in the contemporary discussion: the relationship between soul and body, the nature of 'mental' states (including emotions

<sup>19</sup> By way of example, see *Plt.* 309d-e (a 'courageous soul' takes part in what is just); *Sph.* 228a-b ('perversion of the soul' is dissension and sickness).

<sup>20</sup> The Cartesian dualism is well attested in the *Meditations on First Philosophy* II (AT VII 20–21); cf. *Notae* 6–7 (AT VIII 343–344), where Descartes 1904 puts emphasis upon the fact that 'the human composite' is, due to its own nature, destructible, whereas mind is indestructible and immortal. See also *Letter to Elisabeth*, Primitive Notions (May 21 and June 28, 1643; AT III 665; AT III 691–92). Descartes seems to have assumed that the brain is 'the seat of our mental life', since there is a pervasive system of correlations between mental events and brain processes (see *Meditations on First Philosophy* VI: 'I take note that the mind is immediately affected not by all parts of the body (*mentem non ab omnibus corporis partibus immediate affici*), but only by the brain'; AT VII 86; transl. Kemp Smith). See also *Discourse on Method* Part 5, and Kim (1998, p. 46).

<sup>21</sup> See Shields (1988); Nussbaum-Putnam (1992), and more recently Johansen (2012, pp. 5–8, 227–228).

<sup>22</sup> Putnam (1997, pp. xiii–xiv, 279, 302 *et passim*). Surely, one might provide reasons to show that Putnam's functionalism is *not* 'substantially the same' as Aristotle's view that 'all things are defined or determined (ὁρίζεσθαι) by their function (τῷ ἔργῳ)' (Aristotle, *Mete.* 390a10).



and feelings in general) and the way in which they are realized, the semantic character of intentional states, and so forth.<sup>23</sup> However, it is also arguable that the way in which Aristotle tackles the issue of the soul is most different both from the manner in which contemporary philosophers of mind consider ‘mind’ and from the manner of Descartes, the philosopher who can be taken to be the starting point of criticism for several contemporary theories that are particularly concerned with attacking different forms of dualism (including ‘substance dualism’ that is usually ascribed to Descartes).

Aristotle, like Plato, considers *ψυχή* to be the principle of living beings, an explanatory device that tends to support the claim that body is motionless by itself and thereby that the life of the living being is not rooted in the body, but in the soul which is located *in* the body. Moreover, for Aristotle a vital function, such as a respiratory or a growing process, is no less psychological than thinking. If this is so (and, according to Aristotle, it is), Aristotelian souls cannot be the same as Descartes’ *conscious* mind. Descartes’ problem (i.e. the mind-body distinction), which is more or less familiar to scholars devoted to Modern philosophy, was already an issue in Platonism, of which Aristotle is, at least in part, an important representative. And although some traces of Platonism and Aristotelianism can be found in Descartes (such as the distinction between body and soul, and the view that the soul is an immaterial entity), the Cartesian foundations of what the mind or soul is are heavily different from Aristotle’s.<sup>24</sup>

One of the best-known anti-Aristotelian passages in Descartes is *Meditations on First Philosophy* II (AT VII 29. 7–18), where Descartes clearly removes both the nutritive and perceptual soul. Sense-perceptive experiences (seeing, hearing, and so on) that Aristotle explains by resorting to the sensitive or perceptual soul (*τὸ αἰσθητικόν*) are reduced to the pure thinking (*cogitare*) and are understood in terms of ‘perceptive awareness’. Descartes introduces the notion of mental as pure subjectivity, and the crucial point is the subjectivity of the content of perception: a malignant genius, exceedingly powerful and cunning, can devote all his powers in his attempt to deceive me; however, the proposition ‘*Ego sum, ego existo*’ (‘I am, I exist’) is necessarily true every time I propound it or mentally apprehend it’ (*Meditations on First Philosophy* II (AT VII 25); transl. Kemp Smith). What the Cartesian psychological approach does is to remove the distinction, fundamental for Aristotle, between the properly perceptive and the ‘mental’. For Descartes, *sentire* (in Aristotle’s jargon *αἰσθάνεσθαι*) is not only to sense or to perceive (in the manner one can say that someone experiences a visual perception, for instance), but also ‘being aware of’. Thus, by *sentire* Descartes does not mean ‘the use of senses’ or any other perceptual experience, and insofar as the senses deceive us, we should

<sup>23</sup> Shields (1988, p. 1).

<sup>24</sup> As argued by James (2000, pp. 112–113), Descartes, as a young student at the Jesuit College of La Flèche, must have received a thorough training in Aquinas’ philosophy and the debates surrounding it. But later he took the opinions of scholastics to be mistaken and relatively easy to refute (*Letter to Mersenne*, November 11, 1640 = AT III 231–232, quoted by James (2000, p. 113, note 7).



reasonably cast some doubts on them. Descartes' point is that the 'self' is a 'thinking thing' (*res cogitans*), i.e. a 'thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, abstains from willing, imagines, and also senses' (*Meditations on First Philosophy* II (AT VII 28.20–22); transl. Kemp Smith, slightly modified). *But none of these activities can be done* without the engagement of one's conscience, so the subject cannot be wrong that they are occurring when they are occurring. After Descartes' analysis, one might assume, Aristotle's psychology based on the parts of the soul (parts of which the perceptual power played a crucial role) has been pulverized.

However, in recent decades there has been a renewed interest in Aristotle's psychology; the Aristotelian tenets of vital, perceptual and mental activity, some argue, do not commit themselves to a theory of the soul that is opposed to the body in the Cartesian way.<sup>25</sup> Thus Aristotle is included among those philosophers who favor the post-Cartesian debate about the mind-body problem, and deny that mind (or soul) is radically opposed to matter and the body. But how about the role of Plato in this story? One might say that Plato is the first Ancient Greek philosopher who puts in a clear way these problems in a philosophical framework. Moreover, it is probably hard to imagine Aristotle's developments without the Platonic discussions regarding the soul-body relation and the way in which two entities, apparently so different, can be related to each other in causal terms.

No matter how important Plato has been in this story, Aristotle is *the* 'Ancient philosopher of mind' who has received more attention from contemporary philosophy. According to Aristotle's ontology, individuals are 'combinations' or 'composites' of matter and form. Each individual is composed by a specific bit of matter organized by a certain form (this is so both for artifacts and living beings). An animal has as its matter flesh, blood, bones, and so on, material things which are 'informed' by the soul (i.e. the animal's form) in a distinctive way to sustain a kind of life that otherwise would be impossible. In fact, according to Aristotle, there is no face or flesh without soul in it; in a corpse one can still see a 'face' or 'flesh' (at least during a certain time), but it is only homonymously (*ὁμωνύμως*; *GA* 734b 24–26) that these things can be said to be 'face' or 'flesh', since there is no soul there. And if there is no soul in matter, matter cannot be structured in the way that would allow a face, a hand or a foot to sustain a certain kind of life, this life being a face, a hand or a foot *functioning* as these 'organic instruments' work in a *living* being. A foot or a hand are not made by heat alone, and the same applies to flesh, for this too has a function (*ἔργον*, *GA* 734b29–30).

Roughly speaking, this is a general (and a little simplistic) description of the so-called Aristotle's 'hylomorphism'. As recognized by some contemporary philosophers who defend a 'neo-Aristotelian metaphysics',<sup>26</sup> the central problem of hylomorphism lies in the fact that every individual is a 'combination', and such combination cannot be a 'putting together' of two mutually independent items (since such items, i.e. matter and form, are 'incomplete entities' which complete each other in the individual that is such a combination). This way of tackling and

<sup>25</sup> Charles (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Lowe (2013, pp. 197–198).

recovering Aristotle's ideas looks like a fresh start for coming back to the systematic problems that the Ancient philosophers first adumbrated and still are worth discussing.

Thus we believe that it is possible to bring Plato and Aristotle (and even their commentators) into discussion with contemporary philosophy (keeping in mind, of course, the more classical treatment of the texts and their contexts). In our view, it is worth taking the risk of treating the philosophers discussed in this book as considering a similar but different approach to that of contemporary philosophy. We hope that through this project, it will become clear that one can still debate with Plato and Aristotle as if they were living philosophers, who are able to provide accounts and promote inquiry in order for us to better understand issues that, even today, have not been entirely solved.

## 1.4 Contents of this Volume

Almost all the subject matters mentioned above are tackled, from different perspectives and interpretative traditions, in this volume. In Chap. 2 ('The Influence of the 'Honeyed Muse' (ἡδυσμένη Μοῦσα) over the Soul in Plato's *Republic*') Barbara Botter discusses the complex issue of Plato's rejection of poetry and poetic style. Although she grants that Plato deplores their morally degrading influence through the pleasure they afford, she is intent on showing that Plato proposes a reform of dramatic style in order to turn poetry into a useful practice. In this vein, Botter casts light on the fact that Plato commends a 'calm and sober' kind of poetry as suited to his pedagogical purposes, and condemns any kind of poetry that fails to encourage an austere respect for the moral truth. Botter's fresh reading and analysis of some classic Platonic passages on these topics opens a view that can be appealing for scholars who take Plato to be an important source of inspiration in the contemporary consideration of drama and poetry.

The trial and condemnation of Socrates have been an object of vivid debate among scholars for many decades: what were the real reasons for Socrates' prosecution? Were they religious or political? One might suspect that Socrates' contempt to Athenian democracy made some people consider him as a potential threat for the state. Different versions of the trial and Socrates' defense came down to us. In Chap. 3 ('Socrates on Punishment and the Law: *Apology* 25c5-26b2') Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith focus on Plato's version of Socrates's defense and point out that Socrates offers an interesting argument that promises to provide important evidence for his views about crime and punishment. They argue that there are two main problems with the argument: one is that it is not entirely obvious how to make the argument valid; the other is that the argument seems to rely on a distinction that Socrates himself rejects — a distinction between voluntary and involuntary wrongdoing. Brickhouse and Smith provide a new interpretation of Socrates' view that all wrongdoing is involuntary by showing that some people really do voluntarily harm others.

The following chapter continues in part what is dealt with by Brickhouse and Smith, even though the view defended by its author has a different approach and emphasis. In Chap. 4 ('Why Didn't Socrates Escape?') Mariko Kanayama starts by reminding us that the *Crito* has generally been regarded as an epilogue or a sequel to *Apology*. But this interpretation has been faced with the problem of how to explain apparent inconsistencies in the thought and the way of argument of Socrates between these two dialogues. The 'separation view' argues that the Laws' position in *Crito* is heterogeneous to Socrates' in *Crito* 46b1-50a5 and in *Apology*, and takes it as lowering the level of argument to that of the many both in content and form. However, according to Kanayama, the Laws' arguments are rather intended to enable Crito to approach Socrates' philosophical level. The parent/child analogy presented by the Laws is not such that demands absolute obedience from citizens, nor that allows retaliation in morally symmetrical relations. The Laws' model of justice is the principle of 'persuade or obey', based on the benefits the Laws bestow to citizens. Even the Laws' order to abide by the death sentence was for Socrates their benevolent act that helps him to achieve the good of avoiding injustice. Mariko Kanayama leads to this conclusion through a rather 'simple' way of following the argument of *Crito* as a unified whole, pointing out some problems of the 'separation view'.

Plato famously provides some metaphors to represent the soul. One of the best-known metaphors is that of the soul in the *Theaetetus* as a 'wax block' (where one's perceptual experience is impressed). In Chap. 5 ('Plato's Wax Tablet') Yasuhira Y. Kanayama furnishes an account of the different means of writing used in antiquity to better understand the complexity of Plato's explanations of the soul in relation to memory and ancient mnemonics. According to Kanayama, the criticism against writing in the *Phaedrus* is directed to the wrong use of papyrus scrolls and of the mnemonic technique relying on images planted in the wax tablet of the mind. He argues that Plato's Recollection does not consist in the retrieval of the images mnemonists themselves planted, but in deepening understanding through exploration, and that Plato's reflection on inquiry by means of the wax tablet led him to the Wax Block (not Wax Tablet) in the *Theaetetus* as an experimental model, and further to the Scribe and the Illustrator in the *Philebus*, his final metaphorical model of mind. Kanayama argues that what Plato understood as knowledge was the type of comprehension Tiresias the augur had acquired concerning flying patterns of birds with the help of his writing tablet, or the one that Theuth had established as the art of letters by Collection and Division. He reconsiders from this standpoint the puzzles in Part 2 and Part 3 of the *Theaetetus*.

The development of Plato's psychology is a fascinating topic; according to the 'traditional' interpretation,<sup>27</sup> Plato's conception of the soul underwent a radical change from the early to the mature dialogues. On the developmental account, *Republic* IV inaugurates a new psychological conception according to which there are parts in conflict in the soul, a view that the 'Socratic' dialogues would not endorse. In Chap. 6 ('Politics of the Soul in Plato's *Republic*') Iván de los Ríos

<sup>27</sup> Strongly challenged by Kahn more than two decades ago; see Kahn (1996, pp. 243–247).

examines the tripartite soul theory and its connections with Plato's political project. De los Ríos discusses the way in which Plato's psychology can be conflated with what he calls 'the whole context of politics of the soul' (understood as politics *for* the soul), and explores the connection between Plato's theory of the soul in the *Republic* and his criticism of imitative poetry in this context. De los Ríos' main purpose is to show that artistic representation is both a psychological and a political experience, or rather a 'psycho-political experience' which involves metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and moral dimensions.

The next chapter is focused on the 'allegory of the cave', arguably one of the most philosophically explored allegories of Plato's writings. As explicitly said by Plato himself at the very beginning of *Republic* VII, this allegory is helpful to illustrate the effects of education on the soul. In Chap. 7 ('Platonic Souls in the Cave: Are They Only Rational?') Ivana Costa starts her discussion by pointing out that the allegory of the cave ends with what she calls 'a distinction between moral and intellectual virtues' (518d-e); Socrates states that the virtue of wisdom (ἡ ἀρετὴ τοῦ φρονῆσαι) belongs to something more divine which never loses its power. However, as emphasized by Costa, in the actual world it is not always or even necessarily aimed at what is good, but is often directed to evil, as the so-called 'bad-σοφοί' do. Costa argues that Plato is willing to grant that the training of the rational part by itself cannot be able to bring together philosophy and good political leadership. As a result, the picture of the soul that emerges from the allegory of the cave should not be considered *fully* intellectualistic. After analyzing the allegory in search of traces of the tripartite psychic model, Costa connects the allegory with *Lesser Hippias* 366a-b and *Laws* 689a-b, where Plato makes a distinction between intellectual ability and practical wisdom. According to Costa, the discussion of this distinction can be seen as a background to some remarks made later by Aristotle in his own discussion of ἀκρασία in *Nichomachean Ethics* VII.

Some contemporary readings of Aristotle's psychology tend to reject the Cartesian dualism as applied to Aristotelian model of the soul, and favor the view that denies that the soul is radically opposed to body. In Chap. 8 ('Plato and Aristotle On What Is Common to Body and Soul: Some Remarks on a Complicated Issue') Marcelo D. Boeri starts by highlighting that both Plato and Aristotle argue that by their very nature soul and body are different, but at the same time they maintain that there are things that are 'common' to soul and body. So, according to Boeri, the question is how it is possible that two entities so different in nature have something in common. He argues that the key to the problem lies in the fact that both Plato and Aristotle regard the soul and the body as capacities, and that — in so far as they are able to act and to be acted upon — such is the 'commonality' shared both by soul and body. Given that capacities are relational entities, both of them turn out to be very plastic notions that should not necessarily be understood as entirely foreign to each other.

Affections, passions or emotions (πάθη) are one of Aristotle's favorite examples to illustrate the way in which his hylomorphic model works when applied to his psychology. However in Chap. 9 ('The Causal Structure of Emotions in Aristotle: Hylomorphism, Causal Interaction between Mind and Body, and Intentionality')

Gabriela Rossi forcefully argues that the strong hylomorphic reading of Aristotelian emotions does not really eliminate the problem of causal interaction between soul and body. Taking the presentation of emotions in *De anima* I 1 as a starting point and basic thread, but relying also on the discussion of *Rhetoric* II, she argues that this reading takes into account only two of the four causes of emotions, and that, if all four of them are included into the picture, then a causal interaction of mind and body remains within Aristotelian emotions, independent of how strongly their hylomorphism is understood. According to Rossi, the analysis proposed of the fourfold causal structure of emotions is also intended as a hermeneutical starting point for a comprehensive analysis of particular emotions in Aristotle. Through the different causes Aristotle seems to account for many aspects of the complex phenomenon of emotion, including its physiological causes, its mental causes, and its intentional object.

Not without reason Aristotle's practical treatises have been regarded as foundational philosophical texts both for normative ethics and action theory. Since Plato onwards the analogy between moral virtue (ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ) and skills (τέχναι) has been widely used by ancient philosophers in order to clarify the relationship between knowledge and the possession of moral character on the one hand, and moral action on the other. In Chap. 10 ('Another Dissimilarity between Moral Virtue and Skills: An Interpretation of *EN* II 4') Javier Echeñique explores a dissimilarity between moral virtue and skills noted by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4 in the course of his attempt to solve the *aporia* about moral habituation. Whereas the goodness or worth of moral action must derive, at least partly, from moral agency or acting *from* moral character, the goodness of artifacts is fully independent of the conditions of skillful agency. Echeñique shows that it is the particularly intricate and puzzling character of the chapter that has prevented scholars from noticing such a dissimilarity and consequently from integrating it to the interpretation of the chapter as a whole. He also discusses the significance of the dissimilarity in question for consequentialist interpretations of virtue ethics, which he argues make the mistake of treating moral action as an artifact.

In late Antiquity commenting on the texts of the great philosophers was a genuine and fruitful philosophical task. The list of Aristotle's commentators is impressive; from Alexander of Aphrodisias (*the* commentator; 2nd–3rd century AD) onwards vast philosophical commentaries were written, several of them being of an excellent philosophical quality. In Chap. 11 ('To Be Handled with Care: Alexander on Nature as a Passive Power') Jorge Mittelmann indicates that Alexander's comments on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* often uncover fruitful doctrinal tensions that help deepen our understanding of some Peripatetic tenets, by disclosing implications that would otherwise lay hidden. According to Mittelmann this becomes clearer than in Alexander's exposition of the several meanings of δόναμις Aristotle laid down in his 'philosophical lexicon' (*Metaphysics* Δ, Chap. 12). The point discussed therein is of the outmost importance: it concerns the well-known division between active and passive capacities, whose joint (and mutually dependent) activation brings about change, that most basic feature of the physical world. Mittelmann points out that the cleavage between those two kinds of power seems clear-cut, although, as he

notes, there are some borderline cases that call into question the subsumption of them under any of those major (and purportedly all-inclusive) headings. What Mittelmann is interested in emphasizing is that the problem that troubles Alexander concerns the way *soul* and *nature* fit into this global picture of capacities and the right way to think of them as *causal* powers. After presenting the general account of Aristotelian δυνάμεις, the paper outlines two mutually related questions Alexander raises about them and that call for careful consideration, since they seem to convey a wrong picture of φύσις. Mittelmann concludes by dispelling doubts and by highlighting some presuppositions that may explain the difficulties Alexander finds in Aristotle's account.

Several Christian commentators on Aristotle, such as Philoponus, Boethius, and Michael of Ephesus, were seriously interested in dealing with and interpreting Aristotle's texts. The fourth-century Christian commentator Themistius produced a number of commentaries on Aristotle's works; interestingly he explicitly says that he intended to write works which are much shorter, so that his commentaries would be convenient for those who had studied Aristotle previously but who were unable to remember them easily.<sup>28</sup> In Chap. 12 ('Themistius on the Human Intellect') Manuel Correia explores the interpretation of the human intellect by Themistius (author of the *Paraphrases on the On the Soul of Aristotle*, among other works). As suggested by Correia, he elaborates a 'prodromic' noetics, according to which the former psychological function is naturally predisposed (as matter) to the action of the latter one, which acts as a form. Correia argues that Themistius' view stems from Plato's *Timaeus* and that his interpretation makes sense of hylomorphism by allowing separate psychological functions both to combine to non-separate ones and to unify cognitive functions and their cognitive objects. In his discussion Correia shows how Themistius identifies the self with the active intellect in Aristotle, insofar as this intellect is the ultimate form of this successive 'prodromic' interaction.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Themistius, *Paraphrase of Posterior Analytics* (ed. Wallies) 1.2–12 (quoted by Todd (1996, p.3), and by Ierodiakonou (2002, p.164)).

<sup>29</sup>We are very grateful to Gabriela Rossi for her critical reading of this introduction.



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# **Part I**

## **Plato**



## Chapter 2

# The Influence of the ‘Honeyed Muse’ (ἡδυσμένη Μοῦσα) Over the Soul in Plato’s *Republic*



Barbara Botter

*Ego autem non urbe, sed orbe tales [poetas] exterminandos fore existimo.*

*I think [poets] should be expelled not only from the city but also from the world.*

Boccaccio Giovanni, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, liber XIV, caput 19.

**Abstract** Plato’s rejection of poetry and poetic style is notorious among scholars and is a recurrent theme in the area of Platonic studies from the beginning of the 20th century onwards. There are important reasons that justify Plato’s critique of poets and tragedians. First, Plato regards poetry as a kind of mimetic art and worries about the life-changing powers of *mimesis*, i.e. the skill of the imitative art to shape the minds of its listeners. Moreover, Plato deplores the morally degrading influence that epic poetry and tragedy bring about in the audience’s souls through the pleasure they afford. This paper discusses the following three points: a) the kind of pleasure epic poetry and tragedy afford; b) the peculiar psychological identification that poetry instills in the audience; c) finally, the reform of dramatic style advocated by the philosopher in order to turn poetry into a useful (ὠφελίμη) practice.

## 2.1 Introduction

Plato’s severe criticism of poetry is primarily ethical in character,<sup>1</sup> although in the *Republic* III (hereafter *R.*) he also complains about a poet’s *Lexis* (*R.* 392c6–8) on the grounds that it harms human education due to the use of excessive variety in

<sup>1</sup>On the ethical basis of Plato’s attacks on poetry, see Nussbaum 1986, pp. 1–21, 122–135; Halliwell 1988, 1–17.

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words, music and emotions. Furthermore, people enjoy putting themselves in various characters and thereby experiencing conflicting emotions.<sup>2</sup> As Gordon recognizes, ‘The *Republic* is perhaps the dialog singly most responsible for the condemnatory view of poetry and image-making imputed to Plato.’<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the literary vividness, the vigor of the images Plato uses, and the poetic technique and diction incorporated into the *Republic* are well-known. The irony is that Plato criticizes poetry and dramatic performances in a work that abundantly displays Plato’s own dexterity in creating effective poetic images.<sup>4</sup> As Petraki observes, ‘almost every Stephanus page [of the *Republic*] seems to reverberate with poetic echoes of one sort or another.’<sup>5</sup>

The most important reasons for Plato’s criticism are the morally degraded values that traditional poetry disseminates throughout the city, the pleasure that theater affords, and the psychological identification it instills in an audience’s soul. Moreover, even though poetry enjoys moral authority in Greek society and its influence in moral development spans across the centuries, it is nonetheless not to be trusted to cultivate the right ἔθῃ. A significant attack on poetry formulated in a poetic style appears in *R.* VII and IX, where Socrates describes the attributes of the unjust soul and the corrupt city. Along these same lines, Plato identifies injustice, injustice, civic upheaval and psychic disorder with a multi-headed beast, akin to the image of Typhon as portrayed in a well-known Hesiodic text.

Plato is fascinated and frightened by the transformative powers of poetry. He writes: ‘have you not observed that imitations (μιμήσεις), if continued from the youth far into life, settle down into habits and nature? (εἰς ἔθῃ τε καὶ φύσιν)’ (*R.* 395d1-2).<sup>6</sup> At first sight, Plato commends a calm and sober kind of poetry as suited to his pedagogical purposes and condemns any kind of poetry that fails to encourage an austere respect for the moral truth. Nevertheless, such a kind of poetry runs the risk of being boring, difficult to put in words, and easily misunderstood.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Plato is forced to recognize the inescapable charm of poetry and to admit that the pleasure of poetry cannot be simply dismissed.

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<sup>2</sup> See Petraki 2011, 18–26.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon 1999, 157.

<sup>4</sup> On the inconsistency between Plato’s poetic style and his criticism of poetry, see Halliwell 2009. Brandwood (1976, pp. 991–1003) lists a collection of Plato’s citations of poetry. For an ancient version of the same topic, see [Longinus], *On the Sublime* XIII 3 (187r).

<sup>5</sup> Petraki 2011, 10.

<sup>6</sup> All references to Plato’s *R.* are from the edition of the Greek text established by Slings 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Destrée 2012, 126.

## 2.2 The Criticism of Poets and Tragedians

In *R.* II and III,<sup>8</sup> (and, from a different standpoint, also in Book X)<sup>9</sup> Plato disparages Homeric myths for being untrue; as a scholar has recently put it, ‘poetry is utterly incapable of bringing out the Real when framing the world’.<sup>10</sup> This comes as no surprise since poetry is one of the *mimetic* techniques (τὸ μιμητικόν) along with music and painting. As Plato explains in the *Sophist*, all *mimetic* technique requires great skills (τεχνικώτερον), and has a playful element to it (Παιδιᾶς ...εἶδος), which allows the poet to produce pleasure (χαριέστερον) (*Sph.* 234b). By means of this pleasure and the representation of actions that must be considered immoral, poetry encourages an unbalanced behavior.<sup>11</sup>

The attack on the poets’ *lexis* in book III (*R.* 392c6-9) is aimed, particularly, at the *mimetic* style of expression; such an expression promotes the identification of oneself with the various (ποικίλη) characters it portrays, thereby causing antagonistic affections in the soul.<sup>12</sup> In this way, poets and tragedians<sup>13</sup> threaten the stability of social roles in the city by captivating the imagination of people and making them consider the prospect of other possible lives. In the same book, Plato draws a careful distinction between the two kinds of pleasure that epic poetry and tragedy raise, namely the pleasure of the images and the pleasure of imitation. The pleasure of image is the feeling one has for the beauty of the art. In the *Sophist*, Plato explains that the artists concerned with the representation of beauty ‘say goodbye to the truth’ (χαίρειν τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐάσαντες) and construct their images ‘not in the actual proportions of the original’ but in those which seem to be beautiful’ (οὐ τὰς οὐσας συμμετρίας ἀλλὰ τὰς δοξοῦσας εἶναι καλὰς τοῖς εἰδώλοις ἐναπεργάζονται *Sph.* 236a4-6; transl. Rosen). Although they are false and misleading, beautiful images, insofar as they are images, *are* not true, but they *seem* to be true.

The second kind of pleasure, the most relevant to my topic, comes from the identification of the audience with the characters portrayed in mimetic arts. In *R.* III Plato presents the experience of identification (ἀφομοιοῦν αὐτοὺς ἐν λόγοις ... ἐν ἔργοις *R.* 396a3-4) between the poet and the poem’s heroes; he also presents such identifi-

<sup>8</sup> The scholarly contribution regarding the criticism of poets in these two books is vast. See Naddaf 2002; Nehamas 2000, pp. 279–299; Halliwell 2009. On Plato’s treatment of poetry in *R.* II and III, see Nightingale 1995, pp. 60–67; Naddaf 2002.

<sup>9</sup> On the rejection of poetry in Book X, see Annas 1981, 336–354; Halliwell 2009; Petraki 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Petraki 2011, 7.

<sup>11</sup> My discussion of the attacks Plato addresses against dramatic poetry is greatly indebted to Pierre Destrée 2012, 125–141.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion about Platonic attacks on poetic *lexis* see Nussbaum 1986, pp. 1–21 and 122–135; Cook 1999, especially Chap. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Homer is called by Plato ‘the primary teacher and leader of all those beautiful tragedians’ (τῶν καλῶν ἀπάντων τούτων τῶν τραγικῶν πρῶτος διδάσκαλός τε καὶ ἡγεμὼν γενέσθαι; *R.* 595c1-2), because he is the main source from which all tragic playwriting stems. Thus, the negative judgment against poetry is directed, at the same time, at epic poetry and tragic performance. See also *R.* 598d9.

cation between the *mimos*, the actor, and the character of the tragedy. This experience is not without consequences, says Plato, especially when it happens frequently, because of its influence over the psychological constitution of the imitator's soul.

In book X Plato describes the impersonation (συμπάσχοντες *R.* 605d4; cf. αὐτὸν ἐκμῖπτειν *R.* 396d7) between the audience and the performer. The audience can fall prey to two types of imitation: the first one links the spectator to the character portrayed in the dramatic performance, whereas the second ties the dramatic character represented to the representation itself.<sup>14</sup> Note that the first kind of imitation is essential to the dramatic representation, because a dramatic scene essentially encourages empathy. The second kind, on the contrary, takes place only when the poet creates images which hide the fact that they are images and thus present themselves as if they were the true reality. In this case, the poet purposely conceals the ontological distance that lies between the model (reality) and its copy (the dramatic play). When this gap is not noticed, the impersonation of the audience with the drama becomes the impersonation of the public with the image that is taken to be real, i.e., the image that is confused with reality itself. The reason why tragedy is amusing is that people enjoy actors identifying with the epic heroes, while the actors themselves enjoy sharing in the actions and feelings of the heroes and the Olympian gods. In this way, poetry becomes a rehearsal of life itself.

We might think that adults who already enjoy a fully formed moral condition are invulnerable to the glamour and the dangers of dramatic play. As a matter of fact, anyone can watch an action film without becoming *eo ipso* a criminal. But Plato is not so confident.<sup>15</sup> The sympathetic contact with the experiences of other people infects (ἀπολάβειν *R.* 606b6) one's own psychological condition and behavior. Moreover, the similarity between theater and real life is an important point in Plato's philosophy, as he observes that people who attend a dramatic spectacle actually *live* it.<sup>16</sup> The intensity of theater's influence is such that there is a mutual reinforcement between art and real life experiences. The way tragedy is lived by the Greeks is very strong. In order to understand this mimetic relation it's necessary to be aware of the 'mythical existence' of the Greeks. As Palumbo observes, in Ancient Greek culture, heroes, characters of literature, and ordinary people, lived as if they were immersed in a shared 'aura'. Usually people saw this sign as the presence of a deity, or of a hero; everyone felt the presence of a divine dimension as somehow intertwined with his or her own humanity. This results in a narrative dimension of ordinary life and explains the naturalness with which people enact *personae* of epic and tragic literature.<sup>17</sup> The mythical past is Athens's spiritual background, which allows the poet and his audience alike to share in (and to enjoy) the same scene.<sup>18</sup> As a result, myths

<sup>14</sup> Palumbo 2008, p. 243 n.21.

<sup>15</sup> Destrée 2012, p. 126.

<sup>16</sup> The *Lg.* start from the *continuum* between theater and life to build the educational constitution of the city (*Lg.* III 700b-701c). See also *Phlb.* 50a-54c and *Cra.* 408b-d.

<sup>17</sup> Palumbo 2008, pp. 168-171.

<sup>18</sup> On the mythical background of Ancient Greeks, see Palumbo 2008, pp. 82-85, 123, 168-171, 287.

and tragedies, like music, easily penetrate into the soul (καταδύεται εἰς τὸ ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς; *R.* 401d6-7).

Plato’s greatest complaint against poetry is that ‘it can even corrupt morally good people.’ In fact,

when even the best of us hear Homer, or some other tragic poet, imitating one of the heroes in a state of grief and making a long speech of lamentation [...] we enjoy it and give ourselves over to it. We suffer along with (συμπάσχοντες) the hero, and take his sufferings seriously. And we praise he who affects us most in this way as a good poet (ὡς ἀγαθὸν ποιητήν) (*R.* 605c–d).<sup>19</sup>

The enjoyment of other people’s sufferings (ἀλλότρια πάθη) is transferred to one’s own, since, when pity is nourished and strengthened by the former, it is not easily suppressed in the case of one’s own sufferings (*R.* 606b). This affection makes them uncritical in front of the spectacle and makes the audience live the suffering of tragic heroes. This reaction is natural, because the irrational part of the soul includes the longing for lament and complaint among its characteristic desires:

what is forcibly kept in check in our personal misfortunes and has an insatiable hunger for weeping and lamenting –since this is what it has a natural appetite for –is the very factor that gets satisfaction and enjoyment from the poets (τοῦτο τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν πιμπλάμενον καὶ χαῖρον; 606a3-7).

A morally educated person is aware (through reason) that the immoderate desire is morally wrong and he is trained to react calmly and wisely in front of it. In spite of this moral training, when he attends a tragedy, he ‘can’t help feeling pity and grief in the typically immoderate way tragedy performs.’<sup>20</sup> Plato condemns people who suffer along with the hero (συμπάσχοντες), because this kind of passion causes ‘pleasure and pain [to be] kings in your city instead of law and the thing that has always been generally believed to be best – reason’ (ἡδονὴ σοὶ καὶ λύπη ἐν τῇ πόλει βασιλεύουσιν ἀντὶ νόμου τε καὶ τοῦ κοινῆ ἀεὶ δόξαντος εἶναι βελτίστου λόγου; *R.* 607a6-8). These pleasures prove to be dangerous as long as, weakening reason, they lead the person away from reality, truth and correct behavior,<sup>21</sup> so that, when the irrational part rules the soul, human action becomes blind. ‘If you admit the honeyed Muse (τὴν ἡδυσμένην Μοῦσαν) whether in epic or lyric verse the pleasure and pain will be kings (βασιλεύουσιν) of law and of principles’ (*R.* 607a5-8).

According to Plato, this situation has a serious consequence: if someone repeatedly engages in mimetic behavior of this dramatic kind, he will nourish the irrational part of his soul and the impersonation of tragic characters will become a sort of second nature for him. Since *mimesis* is not without consequences, he will end up behaving in the same way in his real life.

<sup>19</sup> All translations of Plato’s *Republic* quoted in this chapter are taken from Reeve 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Destrée 2012, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> See *R.* 603b1: πόρρω δ’ αὖ φρονήσεως. *R.* 603a10: πόρρω μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας ὃν τὸ αὐτῆς ἔργον ἀπεργάζεται.

It seems plain that tragedy threatens the stability of the well-governed city because it undermines the Platonic conception of man as an autonomous and rational being. Yet, it is not easy to educate people to become wise, calm and autonomous because, as Plato himself recognizes in *R.* IX, the wild instincts are part of our psychological make-up and ‘are probably present in all of us’ (571b5–6). Thus, what we have to pay attention to is this: ‘that there are appetites of a terrible, savage, and lawless kind in everyone – even in those of us who seem to be entirely moderate (δεινόν τι καὶ ἄγριον καὶ ἄνομον ἐπιθυμιῶν εἶδος ἐκάστῳ ἔνεστι, καὶ πάνυ δοκοῦσιν ἡμῶν ἐνίοις μετρίοις εἶναι). This surely becomes clear in dreams’ (*R.* 572b6–7). Dreams reveal that even moderate and calm people have violent appetites which seek satisfaction. During daytime the spirited part of the soul allied with reason blocks out the irrational desires.<sup>22</sup> But when people fall asleep,

Then the bestial and savage part (τὸ δὲ θηριῶδες τε καὶ ἄγριον), full of food or drink, comes alive, casts off sleep, and seeks to go and gratify its own characteristic instincts (τὰ αὐτοῦ ἡθη). You know it will dare to do anything in such a state, released and freed from all shame and wisdom’ (ἀπὸ πάσης λελυμένον τε καὶ ἀπηλλαγμένον αἰσχύνῃς καὶ φρονήσεως; *R.* 571c3–9. transl. Reeve with slight modifications by Destrée).

Plato’s description of the ways in which images constantly attack the irrational part of the soul is startling and makes us believe that reason can be of little or no use in the task of rescuing itself.<sup>23</sup> If it’s impossible to keep under control the immediate and unconscious reaction to images, it is still possible to control the quality of those images. Although Plato recognizes (like Gorgias in *Helen*) the overwhelming influence of poetry and its pleasures over the higher human faculties, he still departs from the sophist in more than one way. To be sure, he doesn’t believe that the human being is totally disarmed. He stresses the way in which we may overcome the images’ power.

At night, for example, it’s better to avoid irrational desires, by ‘awakening [our] reasoning part,’ and also by ‘feasting it on fine arguments and investigations’ instead of feasting it on wine and rich food (*R.* 571d–572b). It is imperative to make this effort, since otherwise as you fall asleep, the beast in you wakes up, it shakes its filthy head and will do its utmost to gratify its instincts. Since it knows no shame, it will do anything, like sleeping with one’s mother or with anyone else – man, god, or beast. It will commit any fool murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat (*R.* 571c).<sup>24</sup> Plato’s study about the power of poetry isn’t directed at establishing a sort of tyranny of reason, however. As Destrée observes, while Plato would have liked to see the rational part of the soul controlling the human being against barbaric

<sup>22</sup> Destrée 2012, p. 129.

<sup>23</sup> Gorgias’ examination of the power images have over the soul in the work *Helen* seems to have exerted a great influence on Plato’s theory of emotions and can be associated with the analysis of the *Sophist*. On Gorgias’ *Helen*, see Wardy 1996, especially Chap. 2; Petraki 2011, pp. 65–69.

<sup>24</sup> About these passages, see the excellent account of Destrée 2012, 129. See also Kardaun 2014, p. 158.

instincts, he must have been well aware that this is psychologically unrealizable. Such a man would be more similar to a god than to a human being.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.3 The Pleasure of the Unjust and the Elusive Technique of σκιαγραφία

In *R.* IX Plato explains the kind of pleasure that arises from the mixed sentiments and contrasts the ‘variety’ (ποικιλία) with the simple (καθαρός) pleasure which benefits the philosopher. The original use of both concepts is easily found in pre-Platonic literature. The first term, ποικιλία, is frequent in its pictorial and figurative meaning as is testified in Pindar.<sup>26</sup> A negative connotation of the term recurs in the comedy, for example in Aristophanes, with regard to the criticism of the innovative new music. On the other hand, the term καθαρός has a religious significance and is frequently found in Orphic practice and in the Pythagorean fragments.<sup>27</sup>

Plato uses the term ποικιλία with a negative connotation to indicate the psychic features of the unjust, especially the soul of those tyrants who experience conflicting emotions and ‘mixed pleasures,’ that is, sentiments which constantly change from pleasure to pain. This kind of pleasure, which according to Plato represents the corruption of ἔθῃ, contrasts with the philosopher’s unmixed and simple (ἄκρατος and ἀπλοῦς) pleasure. The personality of the tyrant epitomizes the corruption of ἔθῃ in the century in which Plato lived.

In the *R.* traditional poetry and tragedy are the major culprits for bad, unjust, false, and ugly things in the city, because they draw portraits depicting gods, heroes, and humans as embodying diverse and conflicting ethical characters. The tragic performance consists in representing the good mixed to the bad, the just with the unjust, the true with the false. The use of ποικιλία in *R.* VIII and IX is reserved for the description of such a negative stance human beings are likely to adopt, as has been associated with strife and division in *R.* 439b–440a. As Petraki observes, ‘the most unjust soul, that of the tyrant, is also the most diverse (ποικίλη) as he is in Plato’s poetics a many-headed beast that nothing can nurture or restrain’.<sup>28</sup>

It’s important to highlight that Plato describes the image of the tyrant’s soul immediately after the discussion that took place between Socrates and Glaucon about the pleasure. In books VIII and IX Socrates distinguishes three kinds of pleasure that correspond to the tripartite distinction of the soul, the appetitive, the spirited, and the rational (*R.* 580d3–5). Each part has its proper pleasure, but only the pleasure of the rational part is true and pure (παναληθής and καθαρὰ ἡδονή). The philosopher experiences and knows the three kinds of pleasure, thus he can rightly

<sup>25</sup> Destrée 2012, p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> See *LSJ* sv I, II and III.

<sup>27</sup> Petraki 2011, particularly p. 15 n.28 and 17 n.31.

<sup>28</sup> Petraki 2011, p. 22.



assess what is best for the human being. Socrates characterizes the pure and the unmixed pleasure in contrast with other kinds of pleasure by referring to the technique of shadow painting. In fact, the most significant disparity between the pleasure of the just and that of the unjust is that the latter is the simple relief of pain and depends on it, so it is neither pure nor true, but painted with the shadow (ἐσκιαγραφημένη) (R. 583b).<sup>29</sup>

In the *Republic*, Plato associates the misleading façade of poetry with the pictorial technique of the shadow painting,<sup>30</sup> which is essentially the consequence of mixture. The deceitful painter does not remain true to the actual proportions of the portrayed object but, thanks to a skillful game of shadows (σκιαγραφία),<sup>31</sup> builds the copies ‘not in the real proportions’ but ‘in those which seem to be beautiful’ (*Sph.* 236a4-7). In much the same way, the poet changes the real size of pleasures and pains, and thus deceives the hearers: they’ll believe that the poet speaks well (εὖ δοκεῖν λέγεσθαι R. 601a8-9), because the charm (κῆλησις) of the poet is really great.

The ποικίλη soul of the tyrant *seems* to be a coherent, consistent, and complete representation of true happiness, but the reality is different. In fact, this portrait is colorful but disproportioned. On the contrary, the *mimesis* of the just soul is colorless (λευκός, white, R. 585a4) and represents the authentic pleasure (καθαρὰ ἡδονή). Socrates explains: ‘They [the inexperienced in the truth] are inexperienced in pleasure and so are deceived when they compare pain to painlessness, just as they would be if they compared black to gray without having experienced white’ (R. 585a1-5).

As Halliwell observes, it is difficult to know precisely what σκιαγραφία is. This painting technique flourished in the fifth century B.C., even if the main sources are the fourth century philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle. Yet, both of them are more interested in illustrating their own philosophical theories than in providing a right account of the painting technique itself. Plato uses the term σκιαγραφία to emphasize the poet’s deceptive influence over his audience. In the decisive pages 604e-605c of book X, Plato criticizes poetry for the way it depicts the human soul by means of a mimetic and colorful representation (πολλὴν μίμησιν καὶ ποικίλῃν; R. 604e1)<sup>32</sup>; as stated by Petrakis, ‘poetry can apply a wide variety (ποικιλία) of motifs and images, along with its numerous musical modes, to portray the

<sup>29</sup> A little later, Plato adds: ‘Then isn’t it necessary for these people to live with pleasures that are mixed with pains, mere images and shadow-paintings of the true pleasure? And doesn’t the juxtaposition of these pleasures and pains make them appear intense, so that they give rise to mad erotic passion in the foolish, and are fought over in just the way that Stesichorus tells us the phantom of Helen was fought over at Troy by men ignorant of the truth?’ (R. 586b7-c5). See also R. 585a-587a and *Phlb.* 51b-52a. Aristotle defines this passion in the *Po.* in the following way: ‘the pleasure coming from pity and fear through mimesis’ (1453b12).

<sup>30</sup> Plato uses the term σκιαγραφία five times in the *R.*: once in book II, 365c4; once in book VII, 523b; twice in book IX, 583b and 586b-c; once in book X, 602d. On the use of the term in the *R.* and in the other dialogues see Petraki 2011, pp. 246–263.

<sup>31</sup> See R. 602c7-d4.

<sup>32</sup> Halliwell 2009, p. 257.



multifarious.’<sup>33</sup> The poet’s σκιαγραφία consists of a mixture of verbal words that represent the ethical attributes embodied in the characters of tragedy and epic poetry. The poet’s technique resembles the artistic mixture of contrasting colors which, when viewed from afar, gives the impression of unity and integration (R. 601a-b, 605a8-605b2. See also 373a6-7, 373b2-c1).

In the R. Plato says that the playful attribute of the *mimetike* poetry consists in applying colors (χρώματα ...ἐπιχρωματίζειν) to art through names and sentences (τοῖς ὀνόμασι καὶ ῥήμασιν). However, it is just imitation (οὐκ ἐπαίοντα ἀλλ’ ἢ μιμεῖσθαι), that is, representation, illusion (R. 601a4-6). As Petraki points out, ‘if one changes the perspective and chooses to examine the image closely, the incongruence of its mixing elements becomes striking and the artistic integration is lost.’<sup>34</sup>

There is a curious likeness between the visual phenomenon described by Plato and the brief dialogue between Bushy and the Queen in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, Act II.<sup>35</sup> Bushy, in a desperate attempt to console the Queen for the loss of her husband, wants to persuade her that the sadness she feels has no reason to exist. However, Bushy, with his words, ends up betraying himself and says exactly the opposite of what he intended to assert.

At first, he claims that suffering produces shadows that look like actual pain, but this affection is no real suffering:

*Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,  
Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;  
For sorrow’s eye, glazed with blinding tears,  
Divides one thing entire to many objects;*

With his words, Bushy refers to the traditional distinction between the real object and its shadow, that is, the image of the thing that is produced by the feeling of sadness and sorrow. Likewise, he continues, the Queen sees and lives the world through a kind of grief that, when inspected from near, reveals itself to be empty:

*... so your sweet majesty,  
Looking awry upon your lord’s departure,  
Find shapes of grief, more than himself, to wail;  
Which, look’d on as it is, is nought but shadows  
Of what it is not.  
Then, thrice-gracious queen,  
More than your lord’s departure weep not: more’s not seen;  
Or if it be, ‘tis with false sorrow’s eye,  
Which for things true weeps things imaginary.*

Later, in an attempt to be more persuasive, Bushy uses a metaphor, but ends up contradicting himself. *Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon.*

<sup>33</sup> Petraki 2011, p. 45.

<sup>34</sup> Petraki 2011, p. 258.

<sup>35</sup> The passage is mentioned by André Luis Susin, ‘Mimesis e Tragédia em Platão e Aristóteles’, Dissertação defense UFMG University (May 2010, p. 41). The author finds a harmony between Shakespeare’s tragedy and R. X 603c. I mention the passage with a different purpose in mind.

*Show nothing but confusion, eyed awry  
Distinguish form.*

If you look at a picture right in front of you and stare at its individual details, the image will become blurred. On the contrary, as soon as you place the picture at the proper distance, its outline appears sharp again. This metaphor turns out to have the opposite effect to the one aimed at by Bushy. The conceptual framework is wholly Platonic though: a detail of a painting, when observed from the front and very close to it, appears indistinct; on the other hand, if the viewer maintains himself at a distance, the picture will take on a more detailed shape.

The Queen takes the comparison at face value and stresses that only when reality is obliquely investigated, it delivers its proper meaning to the soul.

*It may be so; but yet my inward soul  
Persuades me it is otherwise: howe'er it be,  
I cannot but be sad; so heavy sad  
As, though on thinking on no thought I think,  
Makes me with heavy nothing faint and shrink.*

The same problem arises for Plato as well: the problem of focal point. To apprehend the essence and the truth the thought must stand at the correct distance and ignore the colorful shadow. Nonetheless, Plato recognizes that the playful character of artistic performances is by no means unimportant. In the *Phlb.*, he observes that poetry's colors, as well as all kind of colors, can be beautiful (περί τε τὰ καλὰ λεγόμενα χρώματα), especially when they are used to produce authentic pleasure (καθαρὰ ἡδονή) (*Phlb.* 51b3-6). As Amalia Riccardo puts it, 'Quando una parola fa accrescere le conoscenze umane, comunicando qualcosa, può ingenerare con i suoi colori non soltanto pericolosi inganni, ma anche gradevoli emozioni'.<sup>36</sup> In these cases, the human being can 'give himself to the words' (ἐπιτρέψαντα ὀνόμασιν αὐτόν) and can entrust the care of his soul to poetry (τὴν αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν θεραπεύειν; *Cra.* 440c4-5), without fear of becoming a tyrant. After all, a speech totally devoid of expression and style would not be able to cause emotions and the *pathos* is required because the affection gives life to the words.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, it is essential for the sentences to have a suggestive and expressive power. In the soul of a poet there must always be a painter who 'draws in the soul pictures of the sentences of thought' (τὸν γραμματιστὴν τῶν λεγομένων εἰκόνας, *Phlb.* 39b6-7).

<sup>36</sup> Riccardo 2005, p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> For the comments on the *Cra.* and the related dialogues, see the beautiful and illuminating text by Riccardo 2005, 100–103. Interestingly, in the *Plt.*, the Stranger of Elea asserts that a picture would be incomplete without the vivid colors (τοῖς φαρμάκοις) (*Plt.* 277c2).

## 2.4 The Importance of the Sight and the Partial ‘Coming Back’ of Poetry

Contrary to popular opinion, Plato after all did not propose the complete banishment of poetry from the well-governed city, as if poetry were a *per se* bad and harmful thing. Quite on the contrary, he recognizes even in the *Parmenides* and in the *Sophist* the importance of ‘dramatizing’ language.<sup>38</sup> This may be due to the fact that, as Herodotus says at the beginning of his *Histories*, ‘Men have less faith in what they hear than what they see’ (ὥτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἔόντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν) (1, 8, 10–11).

Plato doesn’t condemn the use of images and discourse involving images. Socrates repeatedly stresses the importance of vision for the comprehension of the world and human complexity. Moreover, in the *R.* he avails himself of convincing portraits to represent the good city, the Forms, the human soul, the soul of the unjust. Furthermore his discourse is a well-knit fabric of sentences (*logoi*), poetry (*poiesis*), images and sight (*eikones* and *opsis*). The philosopher fully recognizes that images have a pervasive power and exert an influence on the soul, and that by getting in touch with the language full of images the mind is shaped even in its moral character.

In this respect Ford<sup>39</sup> goes as far as to assert that Plato adopted the poetics of Gorgias: ‘In his *Republic*, Plato rests his arguments on the power of vision and the use of *eikones* as a means for examining the nature of justice and its difference from the injustice.’ Nonetheless, Plato also diverges from the sophist because, according to Gorgias, the soul is totally absorbed by the images; moreover, Plato proposes ways to control the impact of images and the different kinds of performances that implant pictures of any sort on the human soul.<sup>40</sup>

In his concluding attack Plato excludes from the ideal city all the poets who don’t represent gods and good men properly. It’s evident that the Ὅμηρον ποιητικώτατον is the first to leave the city (*R.* X 607a2). This doesn’t mean the censorship of images from the city. Plato stresses the importance of sight as a philosophical way to investigate, and gives a detailed account of the strength of images at 401b1-d2, after Socrates’ proposal of cleansing poetry and music from the City:

Is it only poets we have to supervise (ἐπιστατητέον), then, compelling them either to embody the image of a good character (τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ εἰκόνα ἦθους) in their poems or else not to practice their craft among us? Or mustn’t we also supervise all the other craftsmen, and forbid them to represent a character that is bad, intemperate, illiberal, and graceless, in their images of living beings, in their buildings, or in any of the other products of their craft (τὸ κακὸς τοῦτο καὶ ἀκόλαστον καὶ ἀνελεύθερον καὶ ἄσχημον)? And mustn’t the one who finds this impossible be prevented from practicing in our city, so that our guardians will not be brought up on images of evil as in a meadow of bad grass, where

<sup>38</sup> Petraki 2011, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> 2002, cited by Petraki 2011, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion on the connection between philosophical imagistic speech and painting, see Reeve 1998, pp. 220–231.

they crop and graze every day from all that surrounds them until, little by little, they unwittingly accumulate a large amount of evil in their souls? Instead, mustn't we look for craftsmen who are naturally capable of pursuing what is fine and graceful (τοὺς εὐφροῶς δυναμένους ἰχνεύειν τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ τε καὶ εὐσχήμονος φύσιν) in their work, so that our young people will live in a healthy place and be benefited on all sides as the influence exerted by those fine works affects their eyes and ears like a healthy breeze from wholesome regions, and imperceptibly guides them from earliest childhood into being similar to, friendly toward, and concordant with the beauty of reason? (R. 401b1-d2).

Plato's idea is that in order to become good citizens it's necessary to watch plays which represent *sophrones*, and *hosioi* men (R. 395c5). This kind of spectacle is κάλλιστον θέαμα τῷ δυναμένῳ θεᾶσθαι (R. 402d4). Nonetheless, at 604e–605a, Plato observes that

whereas the wise and quiet character (τὸ δὲ φρόνιμόν τε καὶ ἡσύχιον ἦθος), which always remains pretty much selfsame, is neither easy to imitate (μιμήσασθαι) nor easy to understand when imitated—especially not at a festival where multifarious people are gathered together in theaters. For the experience being imitated is alien to them. The imitative poet, then, clearly does not naturally relate to this best element in the soul, and his wisdom is not directed to pleasing it—not if he is going to attain a good reputation with the masses—but to the irritable and complex character, because it is easy to imitate. (R. 604e2-605a).

The unvarying and homogeneous<sup>41</sup> nature of the good poetry that Plato proposes (R. 398b) is not easy to represent, 'and probably people won't enjoy it. Actually, Plato doesn't seem to have much to say about it. It's possible that his silence denotes his favor for a more poeticized form of poetry'.<sup>42</sup> In fact, as Lessing writes in his *Laokoon*, 'All that is Stoic is untheatrical' (*Alles Stoische ist untheatralisch*).<sup>43</sup>

Finally, by urging a new form of poetry for *Kallipolis*, what kind of poetry is to be accepted and what kind of pleasure is to be expected from it (R. 377d-378e)? Later, in the concluding attack against poetry and poets in book X (R. 607a2-3), Plato re-addresses the issue and admits the possibility of taking the rejected Muse back:

All the same, let it be said that, if the imitative poetry that aims at pleasure has any argument to show it should have a place in a well-governed city, we would gladly welcome it back, since we are well aware of being charmed by it ourselves. Still, it is not pious to betray what one believes to be the truth (τὸ δοκοῦν ἀληθές 607c3-8).

If poets are able to compose poems and drama that respect the criteria Plato sets out in the *Republic*, they may have their place in the ideal city. The following passage is more remarkable.

Then we will surely allow her defenders—the ones who are not poets themselves, but lovers of poetry—to argue without meter on her behalf, showing that she gives not only pleasure but also benefit both to constitutions and to human life. Indeed, we will listen to them

<sup>41</sup> The criteria Plato uses for defining the right human nature are the characteristics of the Platonic Forms (unity, homogeneity and stability), whose ethical counterparts are *harmonia* and *symphonia*. See Petraki 2001, p. 248.

<sup>42</sup> Destrée 2012, p. 128.

<sup>43</sup> Lessing, *Laokoon* § 1. (p. 16 of the Italian translation by M. Cometa. Palermo: Aesthetica 2000).

graciously, since we would certainly profit if poetry were shown to be not only pleasant but also beneficial. (μη μόνον ἡδεῖα φανῇ ἀλλὰ καὶ ὠφελίμη 607d6-e2).

After all Plato said against poetry, and since he doesn’t defend Homer and traditional theater either in the *Republic* or in other dialogues, might we think that Plato himself is torn between the *προστάται* (defenders) and the *φιλοποιηταί* (lovers of poetry)? Moreover, who will defend Homer and the dramatists from the exile? Odd as this proposal may seem at first blush there are several reasons for endorsing it (See Destrée 2012). Plato writes in *Phaedrus* that a work is an enjoyable play, which consists, as the poetry, in *μυθολογεῖν* and persuasion (276e3). In the *Ti.*, the philosopher calls himself the successor of Solon, a poet who Plato recognizes as being superior to Homer and Hesiod (21b-d), and in the *Lg.*, Plato observes that the dialogues are competitors with traditional poetry (*Lg.* 811c; 817b).

Surely, Plato cannot be a traditional poet because he has dispensed with poetic meter (*R.* 607d6-9), but if Platonic dialogues lack meter, their aesthetics is far from being ‘a face which has lost the fresh bloom of youth, a face that was never really handsome’ (*R.* 601b6-7).

## 2.5 The Reform of Poetic Style

There is a crucial difference between traditional poetry and the Platonic dialogues. This difference can help explain why the pleasure the Platonic dialogues incite does not harm its audience’s soul. First, Platonic images and poetic style are not aimed at describing a story whose topic lies in the mythical past. Plato employs images to re-determine and re-organize the everyday experience of a world that, with its phenomena of sense-perception, does not manifest a straightforward meaning.

Secondly, it is important to note that its language shows the expressive power produced by ‘colors’, but this artifice cannot be redundant. As Riccardo clarifies, ‘ogni elemento deve essere rigorosamente definito, cioè privo delle ambiguità cui si presta inevitabilmente il linguaggio poetico; sempre troppo colorato dal punto di vista espressivo per essere in qualche modo trasparente.’<sup>44</sup> The attention must be shifted from the creation of the *mimesis*, which often becomes an empty virtuosity, to Plato’s skill of disclosing the truth and differentiating the philosophical subject – a remarkable skill that sets him apart from the *mimetic* technique’s artifices.

Finally, Plato recalls that the pleasure traditional poetry produces depends upon *mimesis* as impersonation. According to Destrée, ‘If such is the influence of *mimesis* as impersonation, one may safely infer that only a non-mimetic spectacle or recital of poetry would offer aesthetic pleasure without threatening to damage one’s soul.’<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Riccardo 2005, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> Destrée 2012, p. 135.

I don't agree with this conclusion for two reasons.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Plato regards art in general, including literature, as essentially mimetic, i.e., the essence of literature consists in representing something. Thus, it cannot be the mimetic characteristics themselves that turn art into something bad. Moreover, in order to banish poetry and tragedy from the ideal city, Plato relies on ethical reasons (cf. *R.* 396b-397c). The strict judgment about mimetic art is not justified by the formal principles of *lexis*, but by the ethical contents this form of art conveys.

It's indispensable, however, to distinguish between correct mimetic poetry and reprehensible mimetic poetry. As we have seen before, in *R.* X Plato links the deceptive character of poetry to the visual illusion created by the technique of shadow painting (σκιαγραφία). As a verbal painter, Plato is committed to differentiating the language used by traditional poetry from his own language.

Traditional poetry is narrated in a very direct way. The poet is used to substituting him or herself for the heroes by speaking on their behalf.<sup>47</sup> Teisserenc points out 'conformant sa propre expression à celle de ses personnages (393c2-6), le poète donne aux produits de son imagination (ou de l'imaginaire collectif qu'il utilise) la plus grande autonomie possible, en créant l'illusion que les propos de ses personnages sont prononcés devant nous par eux mêmes'.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the similarities between reality and representation, Plato stresses that copy is deficient.<sup>49</sup> There is an ontological distance between the original and the image: the image has 'qualities which are the exact counterparts of the realities they represent' (*Cra.* 432d; transl. Pender 2000, p. 41). The full or partial corrosion of the ontological gap between image and original paves the way to the deceitful art (τέχνη ἀπατητική, *Sph.* 240d2), because the world of the poetry becomes the world of the mind.<sup>50</sup>

Contrary to traditional poetry, Plato uses some carefully chosen devices to show that his tale is only a tale and must not be mistaken for reality. I limit myself to the following few points: first, a Platonic tale is told in a very indirect way; second, Plato uses in his dialogues the past tense in order to show that the scene is not happening now. As Petraki explains, this is a common technique in Plato's philosophy to highlight the fictional character of the dialogue.<sup>51</sup> Another artifice is evident in the

<sup>46</sup> It's important to remember that all kind of poetry is mimetic, because *mimesis* is an essential element of *any* poetic style. The problem, I believe, is connected with the meaning of the word *mimesis*. Linguistic researches have shown that in Plato's works and in Ancient Greek literature, the term *mimesis* is not to be rendered as 'imitation' but rather as 'representation'. See Halliwell 2009, especially the Introduction; Palumbo 2008; 1990, pp. 23–42; 2012, 142–169; Kardaun (2014, p. 151 and n.12), who gives a summary of the interpretations.

<sup>47</sup> This technique produces images which hide their ontological difference from reality. To explain this phenomenon, Plato cites the tale of Chryses in the Homeric *Iliad*, where Homer impersonates Chryses speaking on his behalf (*R.* 392d; 393a; 393b).

<sup>48</sup> Teisserenc 2005, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> On the distance between the model and the copy see Pender 2000, pp. 1–27; Vernant 1975.

<sup>50</sup> See Palumbo 2008, p. 142.

<sup>51</sup> Petraki 2011, p.11 n.17. Petraki refers to G. Ferrari 2000, p. 35.

*Protagoras*, which is usually considered to be a very theatrical drama.<sup>52</sup> In this work Socrates interrupts the dialectical exchanges with his own philosophical remarks in order to make sure that people keep the distance between reality and the *mimesis* they are listening to. Finally, every character in Plato's works plays out a performance of his or her own: the number of particles Plato uses to re-create the typical way of speaking of each of his character is quite amazing from a strict dramatic standpoint.<sup>53</sup>

This factor, in particular, influences Socrates' way of asking and answering questions.<sup>54</sup> From this point of view, an allusion to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory seems apposite, because it is closely connected to Plato's literary form.<sup>55</sup> Press observes: 'As literary texts the dialogues are 'dialogical' in Bakhtin's sense; i.e. texts in which different characters see the world and speak from their own well-grounded point of view rather than being controlled by the 'monological' point of view of the author'.<sup>56</sup>

A comparison between Plato's and Bertoldt Brecht's styles will be by all means anachronistic,<sup>57</sup> but we can't help observing a striking analogy. Like Plato, Brecht criticizes the empathy (*Einfühlung*) that traditional theater produces in the audience, and creates a dramatic style which purifies the public from any foreign, mysterious element. According to Thiele, 'Brecht ist durchaus nicht der erste, der auf dem Wege einer radikalen Negation der Katharsis politische Zielsetzungen verfolgte. Eine noch wesentlich umfassendere Verneinung des Phänomens in Dichtung und Theater findet sich schon bei Platon'.<sup>58</sup>

Plato knows the importance of preserving the ontological distance between the reality and the scene, because the poetic image isn't a description of reality, but a translation, a re-production of reality, a hermeneutic of the real world and as such it must be considered to be distinct from it.<sup>59</sup>

Undoubtedly, emotional aspects are very important too, because the soul is continuously modified by the pleasure and repulsion it engages in. Nonetheless, the *pathos* the reader of Plato is induced to feel is not a συμπαθεῖν, that is, a suffering

<sup>52</sup> Capra writes 'Nel *Protagora* il rapporto con il teatro appare evidente' (2001, 39) and '... il *Protagora* e il *Simposio*, i due dialoghi di cui è probabile una dipendenza dalla commedia sono i soli, insieme all'*Eutidemo* ... e al *Fedone* ... ad essere introdotti da un dialogo cornice' (2001, 49).

<sup>53</sup> As observed by Cook, 'their frequency and range is so remarkable in Plato's work, that more than a quarter of all the references in Denniston's *Greek Particles* are from his work' (1966, 141, cited by Capra 2001, p. 47).

<sup>54</sup> 'This also has important bearings on the way that the external audience is engaged with the ideas that Plato's Socrates propounds in the work, as it opens out to include all different kinds of responses to his philosophy' (Petraki 2011, 27).

<sup>55</sup> Petraki 2011, p. 27 n.49.

<sup>56</sup> Press 2000, 5. On Bakhtin's theory, see Branham 2002. For the relationship between Bakhtin's theory and Plato's Dialogues, see Nightingale, 2002.

<sup>57</sup> For this relation, see Capra 2001, 51 and n74, and Halliwell 2009, pp. 91, 96, 371-374.

<sup>58</sup> Thiele 1991, p. 35, cited by Capra 2001, p. 51.

<sup>59</sup> In order to achieve this purpose, Plato uses a complex narrative framework and offers substantial information about the cultural and psychological profiles of Socrates' interlocutors. See Petraki 2011, 142-176.



with the ‘hero’, but a sort of distant and detached pity for him. Unfortunately, this psychological estrangement is far from being the most common reaction to a dramatic performance, since the power of art produces an emotional involvement that overrides all rational objectivity. In fact, *συνπαθεῖν* is a sort of seduction that prevents people from getting directly in touch with reality: they no longer get in contact with reality itself, but only with the prefabricated images. In so doing, they no longer form their opinions by perceiving the things in themselves; on the contrary, they build their belief on illusion, i.e. on images they believe to be realities.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Plato disapproves of the immediate empathy traditional theater brings about in its audience, and he creates a style which purifies the audience from any effect they may remain unaware of. Plato does not renounce the pleasure of *musike* (poetry and music) because, at a deeper level of his sensibility, he does not differ from the lover who gives up with regret the object of his love. To be sure, Plato condemns image-making while simultaneously adopting it so that this technique becomes pervasive in the *Republic* with the remarkable consequence that ‘dense thickets of imagery build many more comparisons than are usually noticed by scholars of Plato.’<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, the pleasure Plato would like to see in the public performance of dramatic plays does not depend on the immediate identification with the hero’s pains, because Plato knows very well the risks of that: the public ends up confusing the scene of the theater with the theater of life.

The audience must be conscious that life is the real tragedy, the tragedy we have to create and to live. As Democritus says:

‘Cosmos is a scene of theater and the life is a walk through the scene: you entered, you saw, and you went away (ἡ κόσμος σκηνή, ἡ βίος πάροδος· ἦλθες, εἶδες, ἀπῆλθες)’ (Democritus, B115 DK).

And Plato concludes:

‘We ourselves, to the best of our ability, are the authors of a tragedy at once superlatively fair and good; at least, all our polity is framed as a representation of the fairest and best life (πᾶσα οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ πολιτεία συνέστηκε μίμησις τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ ἀρίστου βίου), which is in reality, as we assert, the truest tragedy (τραγωδίαν τὴν ἀληθεστάτην). Thus we are composers of the same things as yourselves, rivals of yours as artists and actors of the fairest drama’ (*Lg.* VII, 817b1-8).<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Petraki 2011, p. 80. Petraki refers to Lloyd 1966, p. 229.

<sup>61</sup> An earlier, incomplete and different version of this paper was published in Portuguese in *Endoxa* v. 36 2015, pp. 31–53. I’m very grateful to Marcelo Boeri, Ivana Costa, Iván De Los Ríos, and Yahei Kanayama for their precious comments and remarks. Many thanks are due to Marcelo Boeri and Jorge Mittelman, both of whom labored over the manuscript and saved me from numerous errors with the English. I am also very grateful to Professor Yahei Kanayama for his suggestions and revisions.



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# Chapter 3

## Socrates on Punishment and the Law: *Apology* 25c5-26b2



Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith

**Abstract** In his interrogation of Meletus in Plato's version of Socrates' defense speech, Socrates offers an interesting argument that promises to provide important evidence for his views about crime and punishment—if only we can understand how the argument is supposed to work. It is our project in this paper to do that. We argue that there are two main problems with the argument: one is that it is not obvious how to make the argument valid; the other is that the argument seems to rely on a distinction that Socrates himself rejects—a distinction between voluntary and involuntary wrongdoing. Earlier discussions of the argument require Socrates to be using a premise here that he regards as false. In this paper, we argue that Socrates actually regards the critical premise as true, and thus we end up providing a significantly new interpretation of Socrates' view that all wrongdoing is involuntary. We claim, that even this position (which most scholars regard as unproblematically attributed to the Platonic Socrates) must accommodate the idea (contained in the critical premise of the *Apology* argument) that some people really do voluntary harm to others.

### 3.1 The Argument

In his interrogation of Meletus in Plato's version of Socrates' defense speech, Socrates offers an interesting argument that promises to provide important evidence for his views about crime and punishment—if only we can understand how the argument is supposed to work. It is our project in this paper to do that.

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Here is the part of the argument that raises some interesting puzzles:

If I corrupt them [sc. the youth] involuntarily (ἄκων), the law here isn't to bring people to trial for errors of this sort but to take them aside in private to teach and admonish them λαβόντα διδάσκειν καὶ νοουθετεῖν). For it's clear that once I understand, I'll stop what I'm doing involuntarily (ἐὰν μάθω, παύσομαι ὃ γε ἄκων ποιῶ). But you've avoided associating with me and you didn't want to instruct me (διδάξαι), and instead wanted to bring me here to trial where it's the law to try those who need punishment, not instruction (τοὺς κολάσεως δεομένους ἄλλ' οὐ μαθήσεως, *Ap.* 26a1–7).<sup>1</sup>

Here is why the argument is more puzzling than it may appear: Isn't it a well-known Socratic doctrine that no one *ever* does wrong ἐκῶν, voluntarily?<sup>2</sup> If so, what are we to make of his distinction here between those who do wrong voluntarily and those who do wrong involuntarily? Is it not the case that Socrates believes that no one really belongs in the first group? But if so, is it not also an implication of this argument that no one *ever* actually deserves punishment, and thus the law's entire interest in punishing criminals is wrongheaded? And lest we think that this passage is somehow a slip on Socrates' part or that he fails to see the implication of his own motivational commitments, we need only think of the famous passage in the *Gorgias* (480a1–d7), where Socrates declares that anyone who acts unjustly should go to a judge and receive the punishment he deserves.

There are several interpretive options available here, which would involve offering different answers to these questions and also which understand differently whether and to what degree these questions actually apply to this text. To get a better idea of what the options are, however, let us first reconstruct the argument and see where the questions might naturally arise.

### 3.1.1 *Reconstruction of the Argument*

1. Some wrongdoers do wrong voluntarily and some do wrong involuntarily. (Assumption for disjunctive syllogism; given earlier at 25d6–8).
2. So (given the fact that Meletus has accused Socrates of wrongdoing), Meletus must hold that Socrates did wrong either voluntarily or involuntarily.
3. The law has no interest in punishing those who do wrong involuntarily. (Instead, such people should be taken 'aside in private to teach and admonish them.')
4. The law does have an interest in punishing those who do wrong voluntarily.

<sup>1</sup>All translations from Plato's *Apology* provided herein will be taken from Brickhouse and Smith (2002).

<sup>2</sup>There is virtually unanimous agreement among contemporary scholars that Socrates is committed to the view that all action is motivated by a desire for the good of the agent, and that vice and wrongdoing are always bad for the agent. There is also widespread agreement that his view that no one ever does wrong voluntarily follows directly from these two doctrines. For more about this "Socratic intellectualism," which these views are often collectively called, and the various ways in which scholars have understood it, see Brickhouse and Smith (2010, esp. Chap. 2). For more on the harm vice and wrongdoing do to the agent, see Chap. 4 of the same volume.

5. But, Socrates did not corrupt the youth voluntarily (established earlier, at 25d9-26a2).
6. Yet Meletus did not make any attempt to instruct Socrates and instead brought him to court, which is only where those who ‘need punishment, not instruction.’
7. Conclusion: ‘What I was saying is obvious, namely, that Meletus has never cared anything at all about these things’ (*Ap.* 26a9-b2).

As a first pass at a reconstruction, however, this leaves at least one thing to be desired: the argument, as we have represented it above, is plainly not valid. To make it valid, one would have to add some premise(s) that linked what Meletus is trying to do in bringing Socrates to court with ‘caring about these things.’ It might seem, however, that it is easy enough to see how this is supposed to go: Socrates is (not unreasonably) assuming that Meletus is acting in a way that demonstrates how little he cares about what he is doing. But this, too, seems to run into problems with well-known Socratic positions. After all, isn’t Socrates also committed to the view that everyone *always* does what he or she thinks is best? If so, then doesn’t Socratic doctrine also require that whatever Meletus is doing is a direct reflection of whatever he thinks is best? If so, how could his actions demonstrate that he *doesn’t* care about what he is doing? It seems that before we can get entirely clear on how to reconstruct the argument in the *Apology*, we should consider more carefully what Socrates seems to be saying about how well or poorly Meletus’s actions actually reflect what Meletus cares about. Let us turn, then, to this issue.

### 3.1.2 *Meletus: A Behavioral and Psychological Assessment*

An argument in Plato’s *Gorgias* might help us to understand better what Socrates seems to be saying about Meletus, in the *Apology*. When talking with Polus, Socrates distinguishes between what people really *want* and what they think is best for them.

Socrates: Now didn’t we agree that we want, not those things that we do for the sake of something, but that thing for the sake of which we do them?

Polus: Yes, very much so.

Socrates: Hence, we don’t simply want to slaughter people, or exile them from their cities and confiscate their property as such: we want to do these things if they are beneficial, but if they’re harmful we don’t. For if we want the things that are good, as you agree, and we don’t want those that are neither good nor bad, nor those that are bad. (*Grg.* 468b8-c7).<sup>3</sup>

But some people don’t actually do or accomplish what is best for them (or, probably equivalently, what is most conducive to their happiness). Sometimes, they act in ways that actually conflict with their best interest. When they do so, however, it is not, Socrates insists, because they really *want* what they seem to pursue so eagerly.

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<sup>3</sup>Trans. D. Zeyl from Cooper (1997).

Rather, they *want* whatever is truly best for them, and only *think* that things like putting one's political rivals to death are best for them. Their error, accordingly, is an intellectual one—the mistake is in what they believe and not in what they *want*.

If we apply this view to the case of Meletus, however, what Socrates says about him is puzzling. Again, Socrates takes the argument that is our focus here to show that 'Meletus has never cared anything at all about these things.' Now, it is plain enough that Socrates is probably playing a bit here with Meletus's name, which means 'one who cares' and is related to the verb, μέλειν (to care). But even if Socrates is playing on Meletus's name, it does not follow that he does not actually mean it when he says Meletus does not care about the things his indictment and testimony in court would seem to indicate he cares about. On the other hand, what Socrates says in the *Gorgias* is that all of us *do* seem to care for what is really good. In Meletus's case, the indictment and his testimony would seem to indicate that he cares about protecting the city from corruption of its youth, however that corruption is to be conceived.<sup>4</sup> But if caring about corruption of the youth of Athens is a good thing (and nothing in what either Socrates or Meletus says gives any indication that either of them think that caring about this issue is a *bad* or even *neutral* thing), then it would seem that the *Gorgias* passage gives us good reason to suppose that Meletus really *does* care about this issue—just as he cares about everything else that is good. If so, then what Socrates says about Meletus in his argument in the *Apology* is false, and here we would have a case of Socrates plainly misleading the jury and doing precisely what he promised not to do (see 17a1-c6), which was to speak nothing but the truth.

But we can do better than this. In the *Gorgias* what Socrates says is that all of us *want* what is good, but he does not say that all of us 'care' about what is good. Obviously, Socrates is well aware that some people do not pursue what is really best for them and, instead, do things that are bad for themselves and others.<sup>5</sup> We will convict Socrates of not telling the truth in what he says about Meletus only if we take his claim about what Meletus cares about to indicate a (purely) conative or desiderative condition. But although μέλειν might be used in that way, it is much more likely that Socrates intends the word to indicate what Meletus actually concerns himself with, not just in terms of what he *wants* or *wills*, but in terms of what occupies his thoughts and what he regards as valuable. 'Socratic intellectualism'

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<sup>4</sup>Meletus plainly supposes that the specific way(s) that Socrates corrupts the youth is by teaching them false things about the gods and other divine things. But Socrates has not yet gotten to the part of the indictment that talks explicitly about the gods and 'new divine things' with Meletus, so these topics may or may not be included in what Socrates says Meletus does not care about. What Socrates says later about this (at 35d7–8) would seem to indicate that Socrates may well have included these issues among those that he says Meletus does not care about. Whether we assume these matters are included in the things that Socrates supposedly did wrongly either willingly or unwillingly will make no difference to the issue we seek to raise and resolve in this section of the paper.

<sup>5</sup>Socrates also famously claims that wronging others damages the soul of the wrongdoer and so (perhaps most of all) damages the wrongdoer himself. Hence, any wrongdoing of any kind turns out to damage the wrongdoer. For discussion and analysis, see Brickhouse and Smith (2010, Chap. 4).

allows for agents to make mistakes with respect to what they *should* concern themselves with, either by concerning themselves with things that are not really valuable, or else by failing to concern themselves with what really is valuable. So when Socrates indicates that he thinks Meletus has not ‘cared anything at all about these things,’ it seems reasonable to suppose that Socrates’ claim is that Meletus has not really paid attention to ‘these things’ in the way he should have, and that lack of attention is shown in the fact that (according to Socrates’ argument, at least) the way that Meletus has actually engaged in ‘these things’ seems to indicate some failure of clear thinking about how best to achieve appropriate results.

Even so, however, it might be objected that there remains nonetheless some tension in what Socrates says about Meletus’s motives. For earlier in his defense speech, Socrates alleges that Meletus has attacked Socrates on behalf of the poets who had been shamed by Socrates’ investigations (see 23d9-e5). So here, at least, we find something that Socrates seems to concede Meletus has concerned himself with. Of course, Socrates thinks that his investigations did not actually defame the poets or anyone else, for all he did was expose the way they shamed *themselves* by pretending to be wise when they were not. Even so, Socrates has given no reason to think that Meletus does not or cannot actually believe that Socrates has corrupted the youth by encouraging them to disrespect the poets. In fact, Socrates seems to concede explicitly that Meletus has concerned himself—and *cares about*—how the youth may have responded to Socrates’ treatment of poets. So in at least this way, it looks again as if it cannot be true to say of Meletus that he has not ‘cared anything at all about these things.’ Indeed, it is because Meletus has cared about this aspect of ‘the problem of Socrates’ that Socrates thinks Meletus has made his accusation.

But Socrates frames his specific argument with Meletus by insisting that Meletus has not concerned himself with either the youth or with any of the other things for which he has brought Socrates to trial (*Ap.* 25c). So it looks like the only way to understand Socrates’ point is to suppose that it was not concerned for the benefit of the *youth* that led Meletus to make his legal case, but as a way to retaliate against what Meletus saw as harms done to the reputations of the *poets*. Meletus exhibited in his actions that he cared about the poets, that is, but not that he cared about the youth. Accordingly, Meletus’s obvious confusions and inability to make sense of his own charges indicates that his real concerns were elsewhere, and not on the issues actually raised in his legal case. So Socrates’ argument—our focus in this paper—is intended to reveal just how little Meletus has concerned himself with the issues that must now be addressed by the jurors.

The actual evidence given in this particular argument, however, concerns how Meletus conceives of how wrongdoing may be understood—how it might come about that someone actually engages in wrongdoing, and then how best to respond to the wrongdoer once the wrongdoing has been detected. Specifically, Socrates gets Meletus to concede (and no doubt expects his jurors to concede, as well) that there can at least be kinds of wrongdoing (or kinds of wrongdoers) for whom legal trial and punishment are *not* the best or even appropriate responses. If we have understood rightly what Socrates takes his conclusion to mean, that conclusion can also serve as an invitation to the jurors to consider for themselves whether or not

they have ‘cared anything at all about these things’ in the way indicated. It is plainly a point in favor of Socrates’ defense if it follows from the argument he has given here that Socrates should never have been brought to court in the first place—even if he has done the kind of wrong Meletus claims he has. In other words, it is a natural way to understand Socrates’ argument as showing that *even if he is guilty as charged*, he should never have been brought to trial (and therefore, should not now be subject to the kind of punishment that courts can assign, especially the death penalty that Meletus demands in the official indictment). That, we believe, is precisely what Socrates’ argument intends to establish—without conceding anything to the question of whether or not he really is guilty, which he never admits and elsewhere in his defense plainly argues against. By showing that Meletus can make no sense of his having brought Socrates to trial (according to Socrates’ argument here), the jurors are implicitly challenged to see if they can do any better than Meletus, since they will have to adjudicate the case that has been brought before them. Of course, they may reject Socrates’ argument here. But by making the argument, Socrates at least invites them to do a little better at caring ‘about these things’ than Meletus has apparently done. Do the jurors themselves have some better reply to Socrates’ argument than Meletus provides? Do we?

### 3.2 Voluntary and Involuntary Wrongdoing, Part 1: Socrates as Subversive

So far, it seems that Socrates’ argument is intended to show that Meletus has not attended thoughtfully enough to the question of what sorts of responses are appropriate for what sorts of offenses. It seems a natural reading of Socrates’ argument, then, to suppose that he thinks there is a distinction to be made between those who do wrong voluntarily and those who do wrong involuntarily. The former, Socrates’ argument seems to say, deserve to be punished, and the latter should simply be given instruction. But when we bring in Socrates’s general view about what everyone really wants (and does voluntarily), we find that Socrates actually thinks that no one ever does wrong voluntarily, and so no one ever deserves punishment. The only reasonable treatment of wrongdoers, in this understanding of Socrates’ argument, is ‘to take them aside in private to teach and admonish them.’

Several scholars have found this result pleasing—especially because it allows them to refrain from attributing to Socrates any intellectual support for the kinds of practices of punishment favored in ancient Athens that many of us today would find both brutal and also senseless.<sup>6</sup> Though he does not apply his findings to the *Apology*, in a recent work, Christopher Rowe finds the sort of view we are now considering in the *Gorgias*: ‘My conclusion is that the Socrates of the *Gorgias* does not endorse

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<sup>6</sup>For a full review of these, see Allen (2000).



flogging, imprisonment, or any other vulgar kind of punishment.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Rowe takes this one step further, and into the political domain explicitly: ‘punishment, or *kolazein*, for Socrates, is not a matter for the courts but for *philosophical dialectic*.’<sup>8</sup>

As appealing as we may find this view, we should notice a problem in it that Rowe has helpfully made quite explicit: in this view, there remains no role for courts and juries to play at all! Socrates says, recall, that in cases such as those that Rowe thinks Socrates believes *all* wrongdoing exemplify, ‘the law here isn’t to bring people to trial for errors of this sort but to take them aside in private to teach and admonish them.’ Now Rowe may see in the last words of this claim a clear endorsement of precisely what he found in the *Gorgias*. But the problem for Rowe is not in those words, but in the ones before them—the ones in which Socrates says that ‘the law here isn’t to bring people to trial for errors of this sort.’ But these, according to Rowe, are the *only* sorts of errors that anyone ever makes. Hence, there remain no instances of error or wrongdoing that anyone ever commits for which a court trial and jury would be an appropriate way to achieve a worthy result. But this, of course, is clearly not what the text suggests. On the contrary, it suggests that Socrates believes that some people do indeed deserve to be tried and punished in the ways that were familiar within the Athenian legal system.

There is nothing impossible in the idea embraced by Rowe that Socrates might well have held such a radical and, indeed, subversive political view as that the entire system of criminal justice in Athens was a vast exercise in ignorance and moral disaster. But though there have certainly been numerous scholars who have supposed that Socrates’ real guilt, for which he was reasonably brought to trial, was sedition,<sup>9</sup> none, to our knowledge, have understood Socrates’ putatively seditious ideology as condemning Athens’ entire approach to criminal justice. Yet this is what Rowe’s understanding of the *Gorgias* amounts to.

Rather, those who have characterized the trial and its motives as primarily responding to a political motive understood Socrates as having given at least ideological support to the seditions associated with the oligarchic factions in Athens. We may note that even these factions (and, indeed, every other regime and ideology known in the ancient world) supposed that the proper punishment of wrongdoers at least sometimes merited the kinds of things Rowe claims Socrates rejected. So, the kind of subversiveness that Rowe attributes here to Socrates would endear him not a whit more to the oligarchs than to the democrats. Rather, it would alienate him utterly from all political factions in ancient Athens.

At any rate, it is plainly to those whom Socrates takes to be among the democratic faction in Athens that he speaks in the *Apology* (so see the association made explicit at 21a1–2). We might suppose that it is merely convenient that Socrates fails to ‘connect the dots’ of what he says in his argument with Meletus and the political consequences of what he says there, if only they were connected with his cherished

<sup>7</sup>Rowe (2007, p.36).

<sup>8</sup>Rowe (2007, p.34). Similar views may be found expressed or at least implied in Penner (2000, p.164) and Moss (2007, p.232, note 8).

<sup>9</sup>So see, most famously, Stone (1989).

views about the universal involuntariness of wrongdoing. If he did connect those dots (or, if anyone else in court might have helped him to do so), we might well expect that the negative reaction of the jury would swamp whatever positive ground he might otherwise have gained by challenging them—as he challenges Meletus—to think more deeply about what kinds of responses to wrongdoing are warranted, and by what factors. Although nothing in the indictment against Socrates—or whatever we can find out about the actual motives of the prosecutors who spoke against him—indicates a suspicion that he actively argued against the entire *raison d'être* of Athenian courts, we may safely suppose that discovering this about Socrates would have been more than enough to convince most Athenian jurors that Socrates was, indeed, guilty of corrupting the youth (even if not in precisely the ways the prosecution had alleged).

Moreover, what Socrates says about punishment in various other places in Plato's early dialogues actually defeats Rowe's understanding of Socrates' position in the *Gorgias*. Even in the *Gorgias* itself, Socrates articulates a view of divine correctional justice that quite explicitly endorses the kinds of punishments that Rowe claims Socrates scorns:

It is fitting for everyone who deserves punishment (τιμωρία) from another either to become better and to profit from it or to serve as an example to others in order that others, when they see the suffering that they undergo will become better out of fear. Those who become better and pay the penalty inflicted on them by gods and men (δίκην διδόντες ὑπὸ θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων) are those who have committed wrongs that are curable (ιάσιμα ἁμαρτήματα). Nonetheless, the benefit (ὠφελία) comes to them there in Hades through pain and suffering. For it is not possible to be rid of injustice (ἀδικία) in any other way. But those who have committed the greatest injustices (τὰ ἔσχατα ἀδικήσωσι) and who have become incurable (ἀνίατοι) through these crimes will serve as examples, and they will no longer benefit in as much as they are incurable, but others will benefit by seeing them enduring throughout eternity the most fearful suffering on account of their great crimes... (*Grg.* 525b1-c6).

It is difficult to see how Socrates, in these lines at least, might be supposing that what the gods will mete out to the incurables in the afterlife will amount only to 'philosophical dialectic.' In the *Crito*, too, we get a glimpse of what Socrates thinks divine responses to wrongdoing might be (at 54c7–8), and gentle admonishment does not seem to be what he has in mind. Earlier in that dialogue, he does not manage to find any fault in the idea that one's city might well order one to be flogged or imprisoned (51b5). The idea that unjust behavior conceivably could merit flogging is also assumed earlier in the *Gorgias*, when Socrates enumerates several fairly dreadful punishments that he is happy to compare to painful but entirely appropriate and salutary medical treatments, such as cautery and surgery (*Grg.* 480b7–481b1). Though plainly in a playful mood at the time, Socrates in yet another dialogue manages even to imagine a case in which he would deserve to be thrashed with a stick if he speaks in a way that indicated he had 'no ears and no brain' at work (*Hp. Ma.* 292a6–d6).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> We cite other examples of other forms of punishment that Socrates discusses without any indication of disapproval, in Brickhouse and Smith (2010, p.110).

The passage that is our focus here, in the *Apology*, characterizes punishment as if it were the proper province of the law and court system. If we suppose, as Rowe does, that Socrates failed to see any kind of occasion where this central role of the court system could be fulfilled, then we not only convict Socrates of a kind of political subversiveness that would surely have gotten him quickly convicted (and by a much wider majority than actually did convict him—for which, see *Ap.* 36a3–6), but we also must confront the many passages in which Socrates seems to endorse some role for punishment, as a kind of painful ‘cure’ for certain kinds of wrongdoing. No doubt Rowe and others who have expressed similar views could mount some defense for this understanding even so. But we think the evidence surveyed here gives at least some reason to attempt a different understanding of what Socrates has in mind in his argument with Meletus.

### 3.3 Voluntary and Involuntary Wrongdoing, Part 2: Why Punishment?

Socrates’ apparent endorsement of some uses for punishment in other dialogues might be taken as inviting another approach to his argument with Meletus in the *Apology*. Taking a cue from what he says about punishment in the afterlife in the *Gorgias*, accordingly, we might suppose that ‘it is not possible to be rid of injustice in any other way’ than through ‘pain and suffering,’ as he says there. The purpose of the law, then, would perhaps be to inflict as punishments the kinds of ‘pain and suffering’ that would promote ridding wrongdoers of the injustice that has damaged their souls. For those who have done something wrong involuntarily, however, simple admonishment in private would be all that was needed—presumably because the source of their error(s) is very different from what leads those who need punishment to have gone wrong. Those who make innocent mistakes, as it were, do not need correction through ‘pain and suffering,’ but only by being provided with better information.

Such a difference between two kinds of wrongdoers would seem to indicate that there are (at least) two different moral psychologies that might be invoked to account for wrongdoing. A natural way of understanding such a difference might be derived from the tripartite moral psychology that Plato gives to Socrates in *Republic* IV (and also elsewhere, though there might be scholarly debate about how completely the different accounts given in different dialogues actually square with one another). So, for example, one might suppose that the ‘involuntary wrongdoers’ of the argument with Meletus in the *Apology* would be those who have simply made an intellectual mistake, or suffer from simple ignorance about what is best, which is why private instruction (rather than ‘pain and suffering’) would be a more appropriate corrective. The plain implication of Socrates’ remark is that if one did not know that one was harming the young people with whom one held one’s conversations, one should be taken aside and instructed. On the other hand, we might suppose that the

‘voluntary wrongdoers’ who merit real punishment are those who have allowed some non-rational part of the soul—presumably the appetitive part—to take over. Since this part seems to be especially sensitive to and interested in pleasure (and averse to pain), one might understand ‘appetitive wrongdoing’ as best corrected by ‘pain and suffering’ as correctives.

But this way to understand Socrates’ argument with Meletus encounters a serious problem insofar as it seems to abandon what has come to be known as ‘Socratic intellectualism,’ the view (roughly) that our actions always follow and flow out of what we believe is best for us, given the options of which we are aware at the time of acting. It follows from Socratic intellectualism that whenever anyone does wrong, it reflects and is to be explained by the very kind of error that we above associated only with the ‘involuntary wrongdoers.’ Here is how Terry Penner has put this point:

There is in Plato’s early dialogues [...] a certain ‘intellectualism’ that is quite foreign to the middle and later dialogues. [...] Indeed, that intellectualism, with its implication that *only philosophical dialogue* can improve one’s fellow citizens, is decisively rejected by Plato in the parts of the soul doctrine in the *Republic*. [...] For Socrates, when people act badly or viciously or even just out of moral weakness, that will be merely a result of intellectual mistake. (Penner (2000, pp. 164–5); author’s own emphasis).

Understanding Socrates’ two kinds of wrongdoers in the argument with Meletus as we just proposed, then, plainly violates Socratic intellectualism, as Penner understands it, and so if we accept Penner’s understanding of Socratic motivation, we have a strong reason for avoiding any explanation of the argument that relies on non-rational, appetitive desires. On the other hand, it is plain that the way Penner understands Socratic intellectualism also commits him to the ‘subversive’ view discussed in the last section, since, as he puts it so plainly, in Penner’s view ‘*only philosophical dialogue* can improve one’s fellow citizens.’ Again, this leaves no place for what Socrates explicitly says is the proper province of law courts and juries.

Elsewhere, however, we have argued for a different way of understanding Socratic intellectualism that, as Penner requires, makes all forms of wrongdoing ‘merely the result of intellectual mistake,’ but would also conform to the idea that one kind of wrongdoer would rightly be subjected to punishment of the kind Socrates associates with law courts. In the view of Socratic moral psychology we proposed several years ago,<sup>11</sup> some—but not all—wrongdoing was, as Penner would have it, *purely* intellectual and also best remediated by the likes of philosophical dialogue. But in that earlier work, we also argued that Socrates would recognize different etiologies of belief, where only some of these would count as amenable to ‘philosophical dialogue’ (or perhaps some other, more pedestrian form of instruction, such as presenting the wrongdoer with simple facts he or she had either ignored or never knew in the first place). We claimed that another way in which agents might come to have certain beliefs was the result of desiderative processes—including

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<sup>11</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (2010). Our original position owes much to a paper by Daniel Devereux, ‘Socrates’ Kantian Conception of Virtue’ (Devereux (1995)), though his and our views are importantly different. See also more recently an important amendment to our earlier account in Brickhouse and Smith (2015).

especially appetitive ones—such that the experience or arousal of some appetite would naturally lead the agent to believe that the target of that appetite was something good and worth pursuing or acquiring *unless some other belief-forming process* or prior belief counteracted (or blocked) this other process. In our view, unpunished wrongdoing has the effect of habituating and strengthening the belief-forming process that has its origin in appetite, making the agent less and less able or inclined to attend to or even engage in more rational belief-forming processes, including, especially, philosophical dialogue. For wrongdoers whose bad behaviors flowed from beliefs that have their origins in appetite, we claimed, punishments of the sort Socrates seems to have in mind as the proper province of law courts would be suitably applied for the purposes of correction. In such cases, we argued, painful punishment might serve as a way to interfere in and ideally to break down the wrongdoer's cycle of acting on beliefs whose etiologies derived mainly from appetites rather than from appropriate deliberation and reflection. At any rate, in that earlier work, we endorsed this understanding as providing the proper reading of the distinction between two kinds of wrongdoers that Socrates provides in his argument with Meletus in the *Apology*.<sup>12</sup>

But even if this reading of what is going on preserves a modified sort of Socratic intellectualism, it nevertheless may fail to accord with Socrates' argument with Meletus, and precisely on the ground that we might expect Penner and other defenders of the 'subversive' interpretation to insist upon. For in the view that we articulated, even if there were two very different kinds of wrongdoers who thus merited very different kinds of corrective treatments, it had to be that *both* sorts of wrongdoers would be characterized as doing their wrongs *involuntarily*. They act involuntarily, in our view, because whether it was from simple ignorance or from a veridically unreliable and non-rational etiology of belief-generation, all forms of wrongdoing are contrary to what the agent *really* always wants, which is whatever is really best for the agent among the options of which the agent is aware at the time of action.

So even though the distinction between different kinds of wrongdoers maps well onto the same distinction Socrates makes with Meletus in the *Apology*, the ways in which these two kinds of wrongdoers are actually (and explicitly) characterized by Socrates in that passage seems to conflict with our earlier account of Socratic moral psychology (and proper correction). It appears that our earlier account cannot apply to this passage in the *Apology* precisely because in that account the wrongdoers who deserve punishment are no less involuntary wrongdoers than are the ones who merit simple instruction and admonishment in private. But in his discussion with Meletus, Socrates quite plainly distinguishes the wrongdoers who deserve punishment as those who do wrong voluntarily, and our earlier account seemingly cannot credit any examples of this kind.

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<sup>12</sup> So see Brickhouse and Smith (2010, pp. 103–104).

### 3.4 An Inconsistent Socrates?

The two interpretations of Socrates' argument with Meletus that we have surveyed thus far are the best attempts that we know of to try to interpret what Socrates says here in the *Apology* in a way that is consistent with views for which he argues in other so-called 'early' or 'Socratic' Platonic dialogues. Because they share this same goal, we shall henceforth call them both 'Broad Consistency Theories.' But, as we have tried to show, both interpretations appear to have serious shortcomings—though perhaps those who are attracted to either interpretation might be willing to embrace (or could perhaps find some way to minimize or even explain away) those shortcomings. Another approach—though not one that has been carefully applied to this particular passage, as far as we know—might come from the more recent interpretive stance that holds it a mistake even to look for intertextual consistency in Plato's works. This stance opposes what are usually called 'unitarian' interpretations of Plato, according to which we find essentially the same doctrines endorsed throughout the Platonic corpus. It also opposes what are usually called 'developmentalist' interpretations, according to which we find the same doctrines promoted only in some dialogues, where these are understood to be within the same general period of Plato's development. In this other approach, which rejects both of these 'Broad Consistency' approaches, there is no good reason to suppose that Plato ever even intended to characterize Socrates, across any group of dialogues (much less across the entire corpus), as presenting consistent doctrines. Instead, we are urged to suppose that Plato wrote each individual dialogue to be a complete literary whole unto itself, for which consistency with any other dialogue was neither necessary nor even held as a desideratum as Plato wrote each one. In this way, the specifics of any given dialogue should only be understood within the specific literary context in which it is given. If the most natural understanding of some specific passage reveals it to be inconsistent with some passage of some other dialogue, that is to be explained by the differing other features of the dialogues, where Socrates is portrayed as speaking in different contexts, with different interlocutors, who may have very different ideas about their topics, and may thus require different reactions from Socrates. In this view, Socrates' arguments may be seen as always more *ad hominem* than deriving from some presumption of fixed truth. In an earlier discussion of such approaches, we characterized them as treating each of Plato's dialogues as 'hermeneutical monads'<sup>13</sup> (and so we will henceforth call this the "Monadic" view of Plato's dialogues).

It is easy enough to see how the Monadic interpretive strategy could deal with the passage in the *Apology* that is our focus in this paper. Plainly, were we to regard the *Apology* in isolation from any of the other dialogues (which, again, is what we are encouraged to do within the Monadic approach), we would presumably understand Socrates' argument with Meletus in the way that seems the most natural within the specific context of that argument. Accordingly, we would assume that the Socrates

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<sup>13</sup> So see Brickhouse and Smith (2010, Sect. 1.4 (pp. 30–37)).

of the *Apology* is presented as accepting that there are wrongdoers who do wrong voluntarily and thus deserve punishment from the law, but others who do wrong involuntarily and should be taken aside for provide admonition and teaching. Socrates' argument indicates clearly that he should be included in the latter and not in the former group, and so Meletus's putting him into the former group shows that he has not paid sufficient attention to who belongs in which group, and why.

While such a Monadic approach seems to make the easiest sense of this specific argument, of the three interpretations we have reviewed, we have severe doubts about this way of interpreting Plato's dialogues as a general methodology. For one thing, it is hard to make sense of what Plato, the author, seeks to advance philosophically if he is writing pieces whose content cannot be illuminated or explained by other pieces he also wrote. Then there is the fact that Socrates himself, in Plato's dialogues, very consistently insists on consistency. To quote from our earlier work,

[W]e find Socrates chastising those who cannot or will not remain consistent, and sometimes contrasting their inconsistencies with his own strong interest in being consistent—whether by bragging about his actually managing to achieve this goal (e.g. at *Cri.* 46b-e, 48b-49e; *Grg.* 481c-482c, 508b-509b), or by bemoaning his ignorance when he finds himself unable to achieve it (e.g. at *Hp. Mi.* 372d-e, 376c). (Brickhouse and Smith (2010, pp. 34–35)).

For Plato to depict, across his dialogues, a character who so much emphasizes consistency, but then who also fails to live up to his own standards, seemed to us to be implausible as a general methodology for reading Plato's works.

### 3.5 Socrates Proves What He Sets out to Prove

Before we conclude that the famous argument in the *Apology* with which we have been concerned simply presents us with no attractive interpretive options, let us take a close look at the argument once again. In the preliminary reconstruction of the argument provided at the beginning of this paper, the first premise is given as an assumption for disjunctive syllogism, but contains material that, as noted above, both versions of the Broad Consistency approach appear not to accept: Socrates simply *assumes* here that there are some wrongdoers who do wrong voluntarily, something Socrates elsewhere in Plato's dialogues emphatically denies. In the first, 'subversive' version of the Broad Consistency approach, Plato's more experienced and alert readers will spot this as a defect in the argument, but will also then be prepared to follow the rest of the argument with this defect 'quarantined,' as it were, leading to the *real* Socratic conclusion that the legal interest in punishment is philosophically and morally unsustainable and thus otiose. In the alternative understanding—the *other* Broad Consistency interpretation—what Socrates says elsewhere gives us reason to think that he does not accept this first premise, but would also reject what we have reconstructed as premise 3: 'The law has no interest in punishing those who do wrong involuntarily.' In that view, the law *does* have an interest in punishing *some* of those who do wrong involuntarily, but not others: it has an



interest in punishing those who are more likely and inclined to respond to punishment than to other (more reasoned or more philosophical) forms of instruction and persuasion, based on the different ways in which wrongdoers may come to form beliefs about how to act. Either way, so it appears, Broad Consistency must interpret Socrates' argument with Meletus as including *at least* one false premise. If indeed there is at least one false premise—judged false because of what Socrates says elsewhere—it is worth noting, the basic tenet of Broad Consistency is already violated by both attempts to maintain it, and quite explicitly so. In what follows, however, we will show that one of the Broad Consistency views can actually avoid this problem.

Both Broad Consistency views seek to understand Socrates' argument with Meletus with his claim that all wrongdoing is involuntary in mind. But we think it will help to attend to a feature of this very Socratic doctrine that we believe has received inadequate attention in the scholarly literature. To see this, let us remind ourselves as to precisely *why* Socrates accepts this doctrine: Socrates believes that those who harm others also and inevitably harm *themselves*—or more strictly, harm their souls—by engaging in such wrongdoing. Since, according to Socrates, people never wish to harm themselves, it follows that all wrongdoing is involuntary because all wrongdoing involves (whether the wrongdoer knows it or not) doing precisely what all agents wish most of all to avoid: harm to themselves. Considered as a self-harming act, accordingly, intentionally harming another, therefore, must be involuntary, and it is this that appears to be at odds with both Broad Consistency views.

But notice that when harm to another produces self-harm, it is *only* by *intentionally* harming another person that one harms oneself. Nothing in Socratic moral psychology suggests that someone who harms another but acted in no way intended to harm the other (for example, in a tragic accident) damages herself thereby. Rather, in order to harm oneself by harming another, one must want to harm the other person and be aware that one is harming the other person. But that is just to say that in order to harm oneself by harming another, one *must* harm the other person *voluntarily*. So, it appears Socrates' commitment to the notion that harm to others can yield harm to oneself requires that he also accept the claim, 'Some do harm voluntarily.' The air of paradox drifts away once we see that 'No one harms another voluntarily,' considered as a self-harming action, is perfectly consistent with, 'People do harm others voluntarily,' considered as acts whereby the agents want to harm others and are aware that by so acting they are harming others.

Now that we see that Socrates has reason to make both of these claims—and indeed must make both of them if his famous doctrine is to be cogent at all—let us return to the argument in the *Apology* with which we are concerned. When Socrates says at the outset, 'If I corrupt them [sc. the youth] involuntarily...', Socrates, we claim, is using 'involuntary' as the opposite of the second sense of 'voluntary' we have just distinguished. That is, we should take him as meaning, 'If I harm others, when I don't want to harm them or don't know that I am harming them, then the appropriate response is for me to be taken aside and instructed.' That this is the sense he has in mind is made clear when he goes on to say that he would immediately desist once he has it pointed out to him that he is indeed harming others. Here

Socrates is appealing to standard Athenian legal practice, something the jurors surely accept: Harms to others through involuntary actions that constitute mistakes warrant instruction, not punishment.<sup>14</sup>

So, why does Socrates imply that he approves of courts punishing those who engage in voluntary wrongdoing? Because he does. Although he does not explain his view to the jury, who would no doubt need a great deal of explanation to understand it, Socrates believes that some people do engage in wrongdoing voluntarily, at least in the sense that they want to harm others and they know they are harming others. And the usual reason they harm others, at least according to the second Broad Consistency view, is that some appetite—some non-rational drive—has skewed their judgment about what is best. But as we have seen, according to the second Broad Consistency view, Socrates believes that the only corrective for such errant appetites is for the agent to undergo some form of painful punishment that tempers what has become excessive.

We can now see that far from presenting a problem for a coherent account of Socratic motivation, the argument in the *Apology* actually illustrates one of the central tenets of the second of our Broad Consistency approaches, namely, that some who harm others merit not ‘philosophical therapy,’ but punishment, including corporal punishment. This is because those who deserve punishment, as Socrates suggests in the passage, harm others voluntarily. They know that they are harming them and want to harm them. The explanation, according to the second Broad Consistency view, is that intentional harm is the product of excessive non-rational desire corrupting an agent’s judgments of what is best. Corporal punishment is the appropriate response for such people because pain is what curbs excessive non-rational desire. Even so, it is still the case that what those who harm others voluntarily actually end up doing is, in a very important but also *different* sense, involuntary—since they actually act in ways that are not consistent with what they want most of all, which is to avoid being harmed themselves. But harm to the wrongdoers themselves is, according to Socrates, actually what happens whenever a wrongdoer harms someone else voluntarily.

### 3.6 Summary and Conclusion

Of the two ‘Broad Consistency’ interpretive strategies we have considered, only the second can explain the argument in the *Apology* with which we are concerned without attributing to Socrates a claim that he does not really believe, for it is of the two only the second that can explain the plain meaning of Socrates’ words in the *Apology*: It is appropriate for the courts to assign punishments—including corporal punishments—for wrongdoing. This fact should count heavily against the first of these strategies as an interpretive strategy. After all, it purports to be a plausible strategy precisely because it reveals a broad consistency among the positions

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<sup>14</sup> See, for an instance of this point of view, *Hp. Mi.* 372a3–5.

espoused by the Socrates of the so-called Socratic dialogues. But there is another powerful reason to reject the application of the first Broad Consistency view to this argument in the *Apology*. Were that the right way to read the argument, Socrates runs the risk of inviting the jurors to believe something (according to the first Broad Consistency view) that he himself thinks is false, namely, that he actually believes the courts should inflict punishment on those who harm others voluntarily and thereby invites them to think that he is a supporter of the Athenian legal system, when according to the first strategy, he is in fact a radical critic of that system. This is damaging to the first strategy because those jurors might then be prepared to act on that false belief in their adjudication of this case. Those who accept either version of the Broad Consistency approach generally insist that Socrates would not endorse methods of decision-making that rely on falsehood. Even if the falsehood in this case were to provide a motive for some juror to find Socrates innocent, we must surely not suppose that Socrates would actively wish to persuade such a juror into the false belief. Socrates does believe that he is innocent and that it is of the first importance that he return to the streets to continue his questioning of ‘all who think they are wise.’ But scholars are generally (and we think rightly) quite reluctant to suppose that Socrates would be willing to mislead the jurors in order to attain this goal.

So, we think that by explaining how an activity can be voluntary in one sense and yet involuntary in another, the second Broad consistency view can explain the argument and reveal a Socrates who believes what he says about his own innocence and the legitimate interest the courts have in punishing voluntary wrongdoing. By so doing, Socrates also handily gains the point he is after: Meletus has been utterly careless regarding the most serious matter the Athenian court can involve itself with: whether to execute one of its own citizens. It is our judgment, then, that with the initially puzzling argument at *Apology* 25c5-26b2 we see yet one more reason to accept the second interpretive Broad Consistency strategy.

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# Chapter 4

## Why Didn't Socrates Escape?



Mariko Kanayama

**Abstract** In Plato's *Crito*, after Socrates' attempt to persuade Crito that escaping is unjust (Part 2), the personified Laws appear to persuade this time Socrates (but indirectly Crito) to the same effect (Part 3). The 'separation view' argues that the Laws' position is heterogeneous to Socrates' in Part 2 and in the *Apology*, and takes it as lowering the level of argument to that of the many both in content and form. However, the Laws' arguments are rather intended to lead Crito up to Socrates' philosophical level. The parent/child analogy presented by the Laws is not such as to demand absolute obedience from citizens, nor such as to allow retaliation in morally symmetrical relations. The Laws' model of justice is the principle of 'persuade or obey', based on the benefits the Laws bestow to citizens. Even abiding by the death sentence is for Socrates an act that helps him to achieve the good of avoiding injustice. The Laws whose brothers live in Hades as true judges are taken to be both the real benefactors and the standards of justice. Socrates' comparison of the Laws' arguments to the Corybantic pipes means that Socrates himself has received their curative effect so as to be convinced of perfect divine justice in Hades to come.

### 4.1 Two Conflicting Views on the *Crito*

Plato's *Crito* depicts a dialogue between Socrates and Crito, with Socrates' execution close at hand, concerning whether to obey the death sentence or to escape from prison.<sup>1</sup> It has generally been regarded as a companion dialogue, an epilogue, or a sequel to the *Apology*,<sup>2</sup> due mainly to the direct sequence of settings. But this line of

<sup>1</sup> 'Socrates' and 'Crito' spoken of in this paper are the characters in Plato's dialogues.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Allen (1980, p.65); Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.vi); Grote (1865, p.297); Kahn (1996, p.101). I follow basically this line of interpretation. For other views on their dating and mutual sequence, cf. e.g. Erbse (1975, pp.22–47); Brickhouse and Smith (1989, pp.1–10); Bostock (2005, esp. pp.226–227).

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interpretation has been faced with the problem how to explain an apparent inconsistency in the thought and the way of argument of Socrates in the two dialogues, causing much controversy among scholars.

The *Crito* can be divided into three parts, Part 1: Crito tries to persuade Socrates to escape (44b5–46a8); Part 2: Socrates tries to persuade Crito of the injustice of escaping (46b1–50a5); Part 3: Socrates introduces the personified Laws of Athens, who try to persuade Socrates (and indirectly Crito) that escaping is unjust (50a6–54d1). As is clear, the main subject of the *Crito* is the question of whether Socrates' escape is just or unjust: in Part 1 it is argued by Crito that it is just, and in Part 2 (by Socrates) and Part 3 (by the Laws) that it is unjust. The conclusions of Part 2 and Part 3 are the same, but their arguments are apparently different in content and method. How are they related with each other? What is Socrates' intention in appealing to the Laws in Part 3? How should we understand Socrates' overall position through the *Crito*, in relation to his position in the *Apology*? The discussions of interpreters concerning these questions have converged on the interpretation and evaluation of the Laws' arguments.

Traditional interpretations took the Laws to be the spokespersons for Socrates, the leading speaker in Part 2, and considered his position throughout the *Crito* to be in agreement with that of the *Apology*, which they took, roughly, as representing the position of the historical Socrates. But Grote (1865, pp. 297–309) challenged this view, arguing that Plato depicted a Socrates in the *Crito*, especially through the mouth of the Laws, as a patriot devoted to his fatherland and to its laws, for the purpose of dispelling the antipathy which such an apology of Socrates in the court as was described in the *Apology* incurred among Athenians, and of harmonizing the relationship between Socrates and his fellow-citizens; although Socrates in the *Crito* employs his own rational principles of action as the ground on which to accept the Laws' arguments, the Laws' arguments don't result from these principles nor are they Socrates' own, but are rather rhetorical arguments appealing more to the patriotic feeling of democratic Athenians. The *Crito* thus turns out to be 'in one point of view, a second part or sequel — in another point of view, an antithesis or corrective — of the Platonic *Apology*' (Grote (1865, p.297)).

Grote's interpretation has been followed by various scholars. They allot the two heterogeneous factors Grote recognized in the *Crito* to Parts 2 and 3 respectively, taking the Laws' position in Part 3 to be heterogeneous, or even opposite, to Socrates' in Part 2 (and in the *Apology*). This trend of interpretations I will call 'separation view' and its adherents 'separationists'.<sup>3</sup> Although the separation view includes a variety of interpretations, they all have in common a feature of taking the Laws' arguments to be a mere rhetorical tool Socrates introduced, only to persuade Crito of the injustice of escaping, lowering his argument to the level of Crito, i.e., to the level of the opinion of the many. This manoeuvre of separating Part 2 and Part 3 seems to have a merit in dissolving the apparent inconsistency of Socrates' position

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with note18); de Strycker and Slings (2005, esp. pp.85–90); Emlyn-Jones (1999, pp.2, 22–24); Bernard (2016, pp.29–35).

<sup>3</sup>For this nomenclature cf. Brickhouse and Smith (2006, p.564); Dasti (2007, p.123).

between the *Crito* and the *Apology*, a puzzle for the traditional interpretations. The separationist interpretations naturally focus on several elements in the Laws' arguments they acknowledge as unphilosophical and alien to Socrates' own thought and method.

However, the separation view has incurred many criticisms from various stand-points employing various sophisticated arguments. I hope a rather simple way of following the argument of the *Crito* as a unified whole, evading these complex discussions, may allow us to add something new to understand Socrates' and Plato's intention in the *Crito*.

## 4.2 Crito's Pleading

The very first exchange of Socrates and Crito in Part 1, beginning with the latter's secret visit to the prison early in the dawn (*Cri.* 43a1–44b5), already reveals the basic contrast between them on the whole matter involving Socrates, the indictment, the trial and the verdict. It is for Crito an ill fortune and unbearable disaster (43b8–9, c1–2, c3, c5–8), while Socrates thinks it may be some good fortune and what the gods want (43d7–8; also cf. *Ap.* 40a7–b1, b7–8, 41c8–d5). The subsequent conversation makes it clear where exactly their difference lies. Immediately after the first exchange, Crito tells Socrates to be persuaded by him and saved (*Cri.* 44b6–7), and attempts to persuade Socrates to escape (44b6–46a9). All that occupies Crito's mind is one thing: for Socrates to 'be saved' (44b7, cf. 44c1, 45a2, c7).<sup>4</sup> For Crito to let Socrates die was not merely a disaster of being robbed of the most important friend, but also the greatest shame in that the many may judge him to have put money before friends. When Socrates asks, 'Why do we care so much for "the opinion of the many"' (44c6–7; cf. 44d1–2), when the most reasonable men, whose opinion is more worth considering, will think that things have been done just as they should have been done?' (44c6–9), Crito answers, 'the many are able to accomplish ... almost the greatest things, if one gains a bad reputation among them' (44d3–5). To this Socrates says:

I only wish ... the many were capable of accomplishing the greatest wrongs so that they would be capable of accomplishing the greatest goods. ... But as it is, they are able to do neither, for they cannot make a man wise or ignorant. (44d6–9)

This short remark involves two points Socrates wants to share with Crito: the opinion of the many cannot be the standard for human conduct and judgement; the greatest good/wrong for human beings is wisdom/ignorance, i.e. the good/wrong of the soul.

However, Crito, eager to persuade Socrates, gives no heed to these suggestions (44e1–2; cf. also 44b6–7), but hastily goes on. First he answers two problems that he guesses may have been preventing Socrates from escaping: (C1) the problems his

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<sup>4</sup>Crito's repeating 'save yourself' (45b7, cf. 45c7, 46a1–2) reminds us of his concern for how to 'bury you' (*Phd.* 115c3), and of Socrates' mild scolding, pointing out that improper use of words may have a harmful effect upon the soul (115c4–116a1).



escape may cause to his friends; (C2) the trouble Socrates will experience, not knowing what to do with himself in exile, to which Socrates referred in the court (cf. *Ap.* 37c4-e2). Crito further introduces his own grounds for thinking that Socrates' refusal to escape is not 'just' or 'right' (δικαίον 45c6)<sup>5</sup>: (C3) Socrates is bringing upon himself the very thing his enemies have been eager to bring upon him (45c7–9); (C4) Socrates is deserting his sons by leaving them as orphans, abandoning the parent's duty (45c10-d7); (C5) the whole matter will be not only wrong but also shameful for Socrates and his friends: it was brought about through their lack of virtue, their badness and cowardice (45d7–46a4). Crito then urges Socrates to decide without a moment's delay to do just one possible thing left, to escape without losing time (45c6–46a9).

Crito's arguments are from beginning to end based on the traditional morality, often defined in the phrase, 'Benefit friends and harm enemies', prevalent in the then Athenian society.<sup>6</sup> What he attends to as his standard of judgement and action is what the many think. The ability to benefit friends and harm enemies and thus to complete one's life as a successful man is the virtue and justice to be sought after, while the lack of the courage and the ability makes one a failure in life, who brings about wrongs and shames to himself, his family, and his friends. The whole matter involving Socrates was for Crito nothing but the defeat and the shame on their part, not to mention the deepest sorrow of losing his close friend. What was incomprehensible for Crito was that Socrates looked as if he was willing to seek after the very defeat and shame, and to 'benefit enemies and harm friends'.<sup>7</sup> Socrates' task in the *Crito* was thus to help Crito, somehow through argument, to liberate himself from this conventional morality deeply rooted in his consciousness; to help him to approach Socrates' own concept of justice and morality and to share the latter's conviction that all this matter is neither a defeat nor a shame but what pleases gods; and to help him to accept calmly the death of his dear friend.

### 4.3 Socrates versus Crito

While appreciating Crito's eagerness, Socrates points out in the very beginning of Part 2 that the greater the eagerness is, the more dangerous it is, if not accompanied by justice. In considering whether they should act according to Crito's advice, it is necessary to start from the principle of action Socrates has kept all through his life:

<sup>5</sup> *Pace* Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.36), who takes δίκαιον as meaning 'right', 'moral', not as 'just', I agree with Liebersohn (2015, p.6) that these two meanings are not wholly distinct from each other, and Crito's use of the adjective δίκαιος vacillates between them.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. e.g. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 353–354, 707–711; Solon, fr.1.5 (Diehl) = 13.5 (West); Pindar, *Pythian* 2.83–4; Pl. *Men.* 71e, *R.* 332d, 334b; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II 3.14; Euripides, *Medea* 809–810.

<sup>7</sup> Although Crito does not openly criticize Socrates, it is, in his eyes, unjust (wrong) for Socrates to refuse 'the just (right) offer of his friends to help him' (cf. 45a1–3).

the principle of being persuaded by nothing else in him but the argument (λόγος) that on reflection seems best to him (46b5–6). With this principle Socrates tries to move the arena of discussion from the opinion of the many into reasoned argument (λόγος) (46b1–c6).

What Socrates first does as the most reasonable step is to examine Crito's claim concerning the opinion of the many (46c6–8).<sup>8</sup> For this purpose he tries to reaffirm some points they have agreed on in their previous arguments. First, one should not respect all the opinions people have (46c8–47a6); the good ones are to be respected, but not the bad ones (47a7–8); the opinions of the wise are good, and the opinions of the foolish are bad (47a9–11). Second, in the case of the body one must follow the opinions of a doctor or a trainer, who knows about health and disease; if one respects the opinions of the many who understand nothing, one will destroy one's body (47a12–c7). In the same way, concerning what is just and unjust, shameful and honourable, good and wrong, they should revere and follow the opinion of the one, if there is anyone who knows about them; if they fear and follow the opinion of the many, they will ruin that thing which they used to say becomes better by what is just and is destroyed by what is unjust; Crito admits the existence of 'that thing'<sup>9</sup> (47c8–d7).

Now, if they destroy what becomes better by health but is ruined by disease (the body), without listening to experts, their life becomes not worth living. Needless to say, then, if they destroy what is harmed by what is unjust and benefited by what is just, which Crito agrees is superior to, and is more valuable than the body, their life becomes not worth living. After having established these points, Socrates concludes that they must not take heed to the arguments of the many but of the one who knows about what is just and what is unjust — the one person, and truth itself (48a5–7) —, and that it is not proper for Crito to insist that they ought to take seriously the opinion of the many about just, fine, and good things and their opposites (48a7–10). But

<sup>8</sup>As to μετριώτατα (46c6–7), I think, *pace* Miller (1996, pp.122, 133–136), Socrates judged it to be most reasonable to begin consideration together with Crito by removing the obstinate obstacle (the opinion of the many) preventing Crito from rational investigation.

<sup>9</sup>What is meant by 'that thing' is evidently the soul. But Socrates does not use the word ψυχή (soul) neither here nor anywhere in the *Crito*, while he mentioned it in the *Apology* in contrast with the body and money (cf. 29e1–3, 30a7–b2, 40c8–10). In the *Crito* 47e ff. his explicit use of the word ψυχή would have helped him to argue more simply on the basis of the analogy with the body (47d8–e6), but when he had a chance of using it later, he still repeated twice the same expression, 'that thing' (47e7, 9). It seems that Socrates intentionally evaded the word ψυχή. Just one likely reason for avoiding it is that Socrates was aware that its use might hinder the substantial progress of the argument with Crito, even though Crito's previous attending the Socratic discussions would have enabled him easily to identify 'that thing' (*pace* Liebersohn (2015, p.15)); Crito, as an average, practical man of business, must have also shared the traditional notion of ψυχή prevalent since Homer, which was (physical) life, or the seat of (physical) life, and, accordingly, would have understood what benefits or harms the soul — justice and injustice — on the physical level of 'benefitting friends and harming enemies'. Socrates may have wanted to prevent their very different notions of the word ψυχή from confounding their argument and to focus on the point that 'that thing' had a crucial relation to justice and injustice, was superior to, and was more valuable than the body.

Socrates at once adds, “‘Clearly’”, someone might say, “the many can put us to death” (48a10–11), knowing that Crito is not necessarily being persuaded, and gains Crito’s wholehearted assent to this ‘someone’ (48b1).<sup>10</sup>

Socrates accepts this vehement assent by Crito,<sup>11</sup> but in order to argue that the reached conclusion is immovable, reaffirms with Crito the principle that it is not living, but living well which is of most importance (48b5), and, confirming that ‘well’ is the same as ‘honourably and justly’ (48b7–9), argues that the only question to be considered then is whether the attempt to escape is just or not, and that if it appears to be just, they should try it, and if not, they should give it up, without taking into account the view of the many. To this conclusion Crito replies rather impatiently, ‘I think what you say is fine, Socrates, but look to what we should do’ (48d7–8).

Crito is eager to quit consideration and move to action (44e1, 46a4–5, 48d7–8), while Socrates tries to involve Crito in consideration (46d5–6, 48d9–e5, 49d5–e1), regarding it as most important to act with Crito’s agreement (through persuading him), not against his wishes (48e3–5), however Herculean the task is.

With Crito’s assent to try, what they confirm first in the full-scale discussion of whether it is right to escape or not is the principle on which they have often been expressing their agreement:

Principle (1): One must never do injustice. (49b7)<sup>12</sup>

It is not difficult for Crito to accept this principle, as his reply ‘indeed not’ (49b8) shows. But it becomes difficult for him to accept the next proposition Socrates infers from it: one must not do injustice in return even if one has injustice done (49b9). To this proposition Crito gives a rather reluctant assent, ‘It seems not’ (49c1).<sup>13</sup> It is difficult for Crito to accept it, because it is contrary to what the many say (49b9–10). So, Socrates replaces ‘do injustice’ with ‘do wrong’ (49c2–3), and tries to obtain Crito’s agreement that it is not just to do wrong in return even if one has suffered wrong (49c4–5). This is also contrary to what the many say (49c4–5), but this time Crito agrees in a determined way (49c6). Then from Crito’s agreement

<sup>10</sup> By ‘someone’ Socrates refers implicitly to Crito. The analogy between the body and ‘that thing’ so far was not helpful enough for Crito to go beyond the level of physical body. The counterargument Socrates proposed reflects this ineffectuality, of which Socrates was well aware (cf. 44d1–5, also 48c5–6).

<sup>11</sup> If we attribute ‘you are right’ (48b2) to Socrates, this remark can be regarded not only as his acceptance but as an expression of his care for Crito, to help him to continue their dialogue together.

<sup>12</sup> I adopt the following translations of key words: ‘do injustice’ (ἀδικεῖν), ‘do injustice in return’ (ἀνταδικεῖν), ‘do wrong’ (κακουργεῖν, κακὰ ἐργάζειν), ‘do wrong in return’ (ἀντικακουργεῖν), ‘work wrong’ (κακῶς ποιεῖν), ‘suffer wrong’ (κακῶς πάσχειν), ‘just’ (δίκαιος), following in outline Kraut (1984, pp.25–26, notes 1, 2 and 3).

<sup>13</sup> In clear contrast to his response to Principle (1), Crito’s reluctance in his assent to this principle certainly shows his inner conflict between his rational consideration and deep-rooted opinion of the many. As to the novelty of this principle in the eyes of the many, cf. Vlastos (1991, pp.179–199); Harte (2005, p.232 with note 12).

to the identity of 'working wrong' and 'doing injustice' (49c7–9), Socrates infers the general ban on retaliation:

Principle (1\*): One ought neither to do injustice in return, nor to work wrong on anyone, no matter what one may suffer at their hands. (49c10–11)

But at this point Socrates points out that this is and will be a minority view (49d1–2).

He tells Crito that it is impossible for those who are in disagreement on this point to continue discussion together, and asks him to consider carefully whether he is really in agreement with Socrates on this view and is ready to start from here (49d3–e3).<sup>14</sup> Crito at once agrees and tells Socrates to say the next thing, but his agreement doesn't seem to come from his careful consideration (49e4). So Socrates says, 'Then, I say the next thing, or rather ask you' (49e5), expressing his will to involve Crito in consideration, rather than just to say and impose his opinion. He presents thus another principle and asks Crito's opinion:

Principle (2): One should do things one agrees with someone to do, provided that they are just. (49e6)<sup>15</sup>

He gains Crito's agreement on this principle, too (49e8). The establishment of these two principles then leads Socrates to the next step; he asks again Crito:

(A) If we go away from here without having persuaded the city, are we working wrong on others — those on whom we least of all should —, or not? (B) And are we abiding by things we agreed are just, or not? (49e9–50a3)

But Crito is unable to answer these questions (50a4–5). This then makes Socrates introduce the Laws of Athens<sup>16</sup> and Part 3 starts.

Before and after this appearance of the Laws separationists draw a (more or less) distinct line in content and form of the arguments, in conformity to their basic position. Weiss (1998, p.57), for example, supposes that *before* the Laws enter the discussion, Socrates' argument against escape is complete, and presents her analysis of all the relevant components of what she takes to be Socrates' argument against escape. But 'Socrates' argument' constructed by her is hardly persuasive,<sup>17</sup> and the summary above of the progress of argument from Part 2 to Part 3 clearly shows Socrates' keen eagerness to involve Crito in their joint inquiry and the continuation of argument. He never tries to lower the level of discussion to that of the many, but to lead Crito up to that of his own. The Laws are introduced in this context. By making

<sup>14</sup> Socrates' words suggest that he took the biggest obstacle in persuading Crito to be the deep-rooted view of justice of retaliation, held by the many.

<sup>15</sup> I will later deal with the meaning of the proviso: 'provided that they are just'.

<sup>16</sup> οἱ νόμοι καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς πόλεως (50a7–8). τὸ κοινὸν τῆς πόλεως (the common constitution of the city) is intended as the synonym to οἱ νόμοι (the Laws of Athens) (cf. Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.61)); I take it that οἱ νόμοι (or ἡμεῖς) and ἡ πόλις (or ἡ πατρις) are exchangeable concepts (cf. 50b1–2, d1, 51a2–3, 4–5, d3–4, 52b2, b9–c1, 53a4–5).

<sup>17</sup> I don't enter here into the details of Weiss' analysis (1998, Chap. 4: pp.57–83, esp. p.80). For the criticism against her argument, cf. Harte (2000, pp.362–366); Stokes (2005, pp.201–209 (Appendix)).

Crito witness the conversation between the Laws and Socrates, Socrates is taken to make Crito indirectly engage in inquiry, and thus to be continuing his life-long practice of philosophical care for his friends, in this case, especially for the sake of his old friend.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.4 Crito's Impasse and the Appearance of the Laws

What are the points that Crito could not understand in Socrates' question at 49e9-50a3, shown above? It consists of two questions, distinguished above as (A) and (B). It is reasonable to suppose that Crito's puzzlement (50a4–5) was directed to both questions. Also Crito is supposed to have recognized at least that Socrates' question was to be replied by applying Principle (1) and Principle (2), unless we think he was too dull to notice the evident connection of the question with these Principles, made clear by Socrates' demand, 'Consider starting from them' (49e9). However, both these Principles were argued throughout 49a4-e8 at the level of complete generality. It was unclear how they could be applied to the specific case Socrates and Crito were facing. If it had been clear to Crito that 'Socrates' going away from prison without having persuaded the city' in (A) was an act of injustice, he could have inferred from his agreements so far that by escaping they would work wrong on others, and that the 'others' on whom they least of all should work wrong, were the wrong doers, i.e. they, themselves — or rather that this was the answer Socrates wanted Crito to reach (cf. 49b4–6, 54c2–6). However, whether Socrates' act of escaping was unjust or not was the very question they were investigating together. Accordingly, it is natural at this point for Crito to be perplexed and unable to answer. Besides, (B) makes it explicit that whether Socrates should escape or not is to be judged by applying Principle (2) to their specific case. But how to apply it to this case is not easy at all. Thus not only Crito but also everyone else, at least I myself, need further elucidation in order to answer (A) and (B) properly. We should not be too severe to Crito when he shows perplexity at 50a4–5.

To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand (a) *what* 'we agreed as just things', and (b) *to whom*. Socrates' introduction of the Laws in this context suggests quite naturally that the Law's first questioning, shown below, is meant to help Crito to understand (a) and (b).

Tell me, Socrates, what do you have in mind to do? Are you not intending by this thing you are trying to do, to destroy us, the Laws, and the entire city, so far as in you lies? Or, do you think that the city can still exist and not be overturned, in which the decisions reached in the courts have no force but are made invalid and ruined by private persons? (50a8-b5)

According to this questioning, what Crito should have understood is that:

- (a') they agreed as a just thing 'to follow the decisions reached in the courts';
- (b') 'to the law ordaining it'.

<sup>18</sup> Pace Weiss (1998, pp.83, 146–150).

The Laws censure Socrates, saying that to neglect this particular law is to overturn the Laws (the whole system of laws), and thereby the whole city founded on them. Needless to say, this censure by the Laws is based on Socrates' Principle (1\*) that 'one ought neither to do injustice in return, nor to work wrong on anyone, no matter what one may suffer at their hands' (49c10–11).

That Socrates himself recognized that the injustice in (B) consists in the breach of agreements to follow the decisions in the courts [(a')] he made to the law ordaining it [(b')] is clear from Socrates' question to Crito, issued just after the Laws' questioning.

What shall we say, Crito, to these and other such things? For someone, especially an orator,<sup>19</sup> might be able to say many things on behalf of the law, now to be destroyed [which concerns (b')], which decrees that the decisions reached in the courts are valid [which concerns (a')]. (50b5–c1)

This remark is followed by the possible words of protest, no doubt suggested for Crito's sake: 'Or shall we say to them, "it is because the city did injustice to us and did not decide the case rightly"' (50c1–2), which Crito enthusiastically endorses (50c4). Why does Crito agree so emphatically? It may be because he still sticks to the 'justice of retaliation' view of the many. But if he is following Socrates' argument (as Socrates has wanted him to), it may be because he attends to the proviso in Principle (2), 'provided that they are just' (49e6, henceforth 'Proviso (J)'), and thinks that if the agreement is not just, one need not, or should not, abide by the agreement — that is to say, in this very case concerning Socrates, if the court decision is wrong and unjust, they need not, or should not, follow it. But Socrates at once confronts Crito with the next reply by the Laws.

What then if the Laws should say, 'Socrates, were those things too agreed between us and you? Or was it rather to abide by whatever decisions the city reaches in the courts?' (50c5–7)

It is true that the decision of death reached in the court was wrong and unjust. It was certainly recognized as such by Crito as well as Socrates (cf. esp. *Ap.* 39b4–6), and actually even by the Laws (cf. *Cri.* 54b9–c2). But the Laws declare that the injustice of the decision does not annul the justice of abiding by the decision, and point out that the counterargument of Socrates and Crito is *laying the blame at the wrong door*. This remark by the Laws naturally surprises Socrates and Crito

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<sup>19</sup> Many interpreters take the reference to 'orator' here as Socrates' suggestion or warning that the Laws' speech is on the level of mere oratorical persuasion (cf. typically Weiss (1998, pp.84–87)). But it is more natural to take the reference to be made to 'public advocates (σύνδικοι or συνήγοροι) [appointed] to defend laws which it was proposed to abrogate' (Burnet (1924, note on 50b7)), rather than to 'orators of all varieties' (Grote (1865, p.302)). Cf. also Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.viii, note 1, p.62); Emlyn-Jones (1999, p.76); Bernard (2016, p.103). Further, *pace* Weiss, the main trunk of the argument is constituted by the questions Socrates asks Crito: τί ἐροῦμεν ... πρὸς ταῦτα (50b5–6) and ἡ ἐροῦμεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ... (50c1), and the part in between (καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα; ... κυρίας εἶναι, 50b6–c1), which includes the reference to 'orator', is supposed to be a sort of explanatory parenthesis.

(50c7).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, as the natural process of argument, the attempt to explain why the Laws' remark is right starts (50c7ff.).

Here it is necessary to stop to consider what exactly is meant by Proviso (J) in Principle (2): 'provided that they are just' (δικαία ὄντα 49e6), which Socrates adds, with no explanation, to Principle (2), but seems to be essential to it.<sup>21</sup> Does it claim that (i) the content of agreements should be just, or (ii) the procedure through which the agreements are reached should be just, or (iii) both? Now, according to our view that the Laws' questioning to Socrates at 50a8-b5 corresponds to Principle (2), their claim that Socrates made agreement (a') suggests that Proviso (J) should be understood primarily in respect of (i). This will be confirmed also by Socrates' protest (50c1-2) against the Laws' censure ('because the city did injustice to us and (καί) did not decide the case rightly').<sup>22</sup> But it is improbable that Socrates should have taken no account of (ii). Generally speaking, even if the content of agreement is just, the agreement will not be regarded as 'agreement' in its full sense, unless the procedure is justifiable, for example, if it is obtained by some unjust means such as coercion, threatening or cheating, or without enough time to deliberate. This means that Proviso (J) demands (iii), in order for Principle (2) to be a sufficient and right principle.

Concerning the content of the 'just agreement' between them and Socrates, the Laws claim that (x) 'one should obey whatever decisions the city has reached', and against it Socrates (and Crito) argues that (y) 'one should obey only just decisions'. Now, it appears to be (y), not (x), that agrees with Socrates' Principle (1). This has made some scholars take it as a matter of course to regard (y) as Socrates' own position.<sup>23</sup> If so, it follows that the Laws' arguments to be developed hereafter is incompatible with or opposed to Socrates' own view; they should be then taken as developed just for Crito's sake without any commitment on Socrates' side. But is it really so? To answer this question, we need to see the Laws' actual arguments more in detail.

<sup>20</sup> Pace Weiss (1998, p.92 and note 29), who attributes the surprise to Socrates alone, claiming that there is no reason for Crito to be surprised. However, as long as both of them share the argument against the Laws that one is bound only to just decisions, which appears to be such a reasonable claim (cf. 50c4), it is natural for them both to be surprised. In fact, I think, contrary to Weiss, that it is not Socrates but Crito alone that is actually surprised by the remark of the Laws.

<sup>21</sup> Scholars argue variously about this participle clause as an important key for understanding the *Crito*; cf. e.g. Burnet (1924, note on 49e6); Young (1974, pp.10-11); Woozley (1979, pp.22-27); Allen (1980, pp.72-75); Kraut (1984, pp.29-33); Bostock (2005, pp.216-218, 223-224); Miller (1996, p.124, note 8); Weiss (1998, p.74 with note 51); Colaiaco (2001, pp.198-199); Harte (2005, pp.235-238); Dasti (2007, p.130, note 27).

<sup>22</sup> 'And' (καί) here means 'that is to say'; 'did not decide the case rightly' may appear to suggest (ii), but it seems unlikely that Socrates found any injustice in the procedure through which the decision was reached. The phrase should be understood as meaning 'decision reached was not just in its content'.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. Weiss (1998, pp.88-91).



## 4.5 'Parent/Child (Master/Slave)' Analogy

The Laws' arguments can be divided into three stages<sup>24</sup>: Argument (1): an argument based on the city (laws)/citizen and parent/child (master/slave) analogy (50c8–51c5); Argument (2): an argument based on the implicit agreement between citizens and the city (51c6–53a8); Argument (3): an argument showing that escaping does not benefit anybody (53a9–54b2).

### Argument (1)

The Laws ask, 'what charge do you lay against us and the city, that you are trying to destroy us?' (50c10–d1), and having obtained Socrates' agreement that he is the Laws' child and slave,<sup>25</sup> proceed to ask further questions. To show them, dividing 50e4–51a7 into two parts, according to its textual articulation:

#### [Part 1]

If that is so, [ἄρ', 50e5] do you think [οἷε, e5] that what is just is on an equal footing for you and for us? That is to say [καί, e6], whatever we may undertake to do to you, do you think [οἷε, e7] that it is just for you also to do in return to us? (50e4–7)

#### [Part 2]

Or [ἢ, e7] is it that in relation to your father, on the one hand [μὲν ἄρα, e7] — or in relation to your master (if you happened to have one) —, what is just was not on such an equal footing as to allow you to do in return to them the things which you suffered — speak ill when spoken ill to, strike back when struck, things like that —; but in relation to your fatherland and its Laws, on the other hand [δὲ ... ἄρα, 51a2–3], that will be allowable to you, so that [ὥστε, a3], if we undertake to destroy you, believing it to be just, then you too will undertake, so far as you are able, to destroy us the Laws and your fatherland in return, and you will say [φήσεις, a6] that in doing that you are doing just things, you the man who really cares about virtue? (50e7–51a7)

It is evident that the gist of Argument (1) as a whole lies in the asymmetry of relation between the Laws (the city) and Socrates (a citizen) and in the inequality of what is just for each party, as its result. But scholars, especially separationists, further read here the fundamental conflict of views between the Laws and Socrates on the concrete contents of Argument (1). For example, Harte (2005, pp. 233–235) argues as follows<sup>26</sup>:

The weight of the argument that Socrates should not retaliate against the Laws falls entirely on the claim that justice is not on an equal footing between him and them; that he is their

<sup>24</sup>Analyses and interpretations of the arguments of the Laws in 50a8ff. vary considerably (including the question of how many arguments constitute the Laws' speech), but I don't enter into their details here.

<sup>25</sup>The master/slave relation (50e4, 8–9) is supposed to be an addition chiefly to emphasize that there is no moral equality between two parties. It is the Laws/citizen (Socrates) and father/child analogy that applies to the Laws' Arguments (1) and (2) throughout.

<sup>26</sup>Stokes (2005, pp.78–79, 133) gives full support to Harte's argument.

moral subordinate. And the principle of non-retaliation which emerges from this may be stated as follows: in certain morally asymmetrical relationships the subordinate person must never retaliate.

This principle of non-retaliation is clearly different from Socrates'. Socrates' principle of non-retaliation makes no issue of the relative status of the persons involved. The Laws' principle makes unequal status the central issue. (p.233)

Harte then goes on to refer to morally symmetrical cases and says:

The Laws' silence about symmetrical cases might itself indicate consent to retaliation in such cases. But they also give this consent explicitly, at 50e7-51a2. (p.234)

She calls 50e7-51a2 'the crucial passage' (whose translation of my own is shown above in [Part 2]), and makes the following inference from it:

the effect of these lines is to make two claims: a negative claim, that in morally asymmetrical relations like this [i.e. between Socrates and his father], it is not right to retaliate, and a positive claim, in the form of a counterfactual, that in morally symmetrical relations, it is right to retaliate (or, at the very least, is not wrong to do so). ... The way in which the Laws present their own principle of non-retaliation itself makes explicit that retaliation on the part of one who is not a moral subordinate either is just or is not unjust. (pp. 234–235)

Thus Harte, who takes the Laws' position to be in conflict with Socrates' outright ban on retaliation, recognizes here 'the first reason why Socrates should not endorse the speech of the Laws' (p.235).

But *pace* Harte, is it not rather the case that the Laws' silence about symmetrical cases comes simply from the fact that such cases are quite irrelevant to this argument? As to 'the crucial passage' (50e7-51a2), I think it is necessary to examine it in its context, which is as follows. With the analogy between parent/child (master/slave) and city/citizen established, the Laws ask a series of questions (50e4–51a7). They consist of two parts: [Part 1] and [Part 2]. [Part 1] begins with an interrogative particle ἄρα (50e5),<sup>27</sup> and [Part 2] begins with an conjunctive 'or' (ἢ 50e7), which in turn contains the contrast between 'in relation to your father' and 'in relation to your fatherland and its Laws', the contrast being made explicit by μὲν ἄρα (50e7) and δὲ ... ἄρα (51a2).<sup>28</sup> In [Part 1] no sooner ask the Laws Socrates the first question, by saying, 'do you think that what is just is on an equal footing for you and for us?', than they ask, restating it by using καὶ ('and', i.e. 'that is to say', 50e6), the second question, 'whatever we may undertake to do to you, do you think that it is just for you also to do in return to us?' This shows that the point at issue in the Laws' first question to Socrates, 'what is just is on an equal footing for A and for B', is identical with the point at issue in their second question to him, 'it is just for B too to do in return to A whatever A may do to B'. Namely, when the Laws refer to 'what is just' here, they are not talking about the question of justice in general, but about the question whether it is just 'for B to do in return to A whatever A may do to B', i.e. about the question of justice of retaliation.

<sup>27</sup> As to 'a sceptical tone' of ἄρα in a question, cf. Denniston (1954<sup>2</sup>, p.46).

<sup>28</sup> As to the use of the particle ἄρα here, cf. Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.65), and Denniston (1954<sup>2</sup>, pp.36–38).

Now, the question here is: who is supposed to have this view of justice (of retaliation)? To my knowledge, interpreters unanimously assume that it is the Laws, and that they are trying to refute Socrates' claim of justice in retaliating, by denying the equal moral status between them. However, when we see [Part 2] (50e7-51a7), which is introduced by the conjunctive 'or' (ἢ 50e7) to explain in more concrete terms the intention of the previous question, we find that from the beginning 50e4 through 51a7 the Laws are inquiring about Socrates' opinion, not expressing their own view.

When we take this reading into account, the most problematic part in Harte's interpretation of 'the crucial passage' (50e7-51a2) is the part where she understands ὥστε ἅπερ πάσχοις ταῦτα καὶ ἀντιποιεῖν (50e9), with the supplements δικαίον εἶναι (50e7), to the effect that 'so that [it would have been just] to do in return the things which you suffered' (Harte (2005, p.234)). This allows her to draw from here 'a positive claim, in the form of a counterfactual, that in morally symmetrical relations, it is right to retaliate (or, at the very least, is not wrong to do so)', as well as 'a negative claim, that in morally asymmetrical relations like this, it is not right to retaliate'. But I think Harte's supplements are mistaken. Here in [Part 2] the Laws are appealing to Socrates' past experiences (σοὶ ... ἦν, 50e7-8). Socrates as a young son didn't dare to speak ill or strike back. It was because justice (of retaliation) was not on an equal footing in relation to his father nor did he think it was. Then, if we need to think about the counterfactual claim, it will become like this: if Socrates as a young son had thought that justice (of retaliation) were on an equal footing between his father and him, he might have retaliated, i.e. spoken ill or struck back. There is no such implication as 'in morally symmetrical relations, it is right to retaliate (or, at the very least, is not wrong to do so)', which is Harte's conclusion.

There are two passages that seem strongly to support our view that the Laws' arguments based on the parent/child analogy do not maintain the retaliation in morally symmetrical relations, but rather shut out the very view that connects justice with retaliation. First, the Laws' questions to Socrates in [Part 1] (50e5-7) are actually the reply that the Laws present in answer to Socrates' (and Crito's) counterargument to the effect that '[it is just for us not to abide by the judgement and as the result to destroy the Laws and the city] because (γὰρ) the city did injustice to us and did not decide the case rightly' (50c1-2). Needless to say, this counterargument implies that under some circumstances it is just to retaliate. But the Laws deny this counterargument outright, and present a different model based on the parent/child analogy, to lead to another way of considering 'what is just', different from the way in terms of retaliation. In other words, the purpose of the parent/child analogy doesn't consist in arguing the conditions of justice/injustice of retaliation.

Secondly, and explicitly, the Laws themselves express what they view as 'what is just' in the case of asymmetrical relations in the argument following [Part 2] (51a7-c4). They insist that the proper way for Socrates to act in relation to his fatherland is 'either persuade or do whatever it commands' (51b4, cf. also b9-c1), and add, 'this is what is just' (τὸ δίκαιον οὕτως ἔχει, b7-8). The governing model of 'what is just' in Argument (1) is not the principle of 'non-retaliation', but the principle of 'persuade or obey', which extends to Argument (2). At the root of this

principle, in which the initiative of action always belongs to the laws (the city), lies the reasonable enough view that citizens are basically obliged to respond and submit themselves to the laws, in return for the benefits they have received from them.<sup>29</sup> It is because of this relationship that citizens are the moral subordinates of the city and its laws, just as children are the moral subordinates of parents (cf. 50e2–4, 51c8–d1).

In this respect it may be instructive to see the theory of paternalism argued since J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (1859). As a very rough explanation, leaving aside many controversies, this modern paternalism is a theory that allows those in a superior position to intervene in the actions of the subordinate, and to restrict them by some command or prohibition irrespective of the latter's willingness, if, as the first requirement for its justification, the intervening in question aims *only* at the good of the subordinate. If it is possible to read this kind of paternalism in the position of the Laws as the benefactors for citizens in the analogy, then their words in 51a3–4 too can be understood from this perspective: although many interpreters understand the Laws' attempt to destroy Socrates, based on the belief that it is just, as a 'punishment' on him, the Laws will be taken to be aiming at doing good to him.

In what sense and why can the Laws 'believe it to be just' to destroy Socrates? As is clear at a glance, the Laws' claim that Socrates is undertaking to destroy them (51a4–6) is the same in content as their first censure against Socrates at 50a8–b5.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, for the Laws 'to destroy Socrates' (51a4) must mean 'to have him abide by the decision reached and die', and, according to the Laws, 'to abide by the decision reached' was exactly 'the things we agreed are just', mentioned above by Socrates (50a2–3; cf. 50c5–7). Consequently, for the Laws 'to destroy Socrates' is not a punishment on Socrates, but, on the contrary, is an act to help Socrates to abide by the just agreement and to achieve the very good of avoiding injustice (i.e. of keeping Principle (1)), which was most important for him, even more than his own life. This is why the Laws can, and do believe it to be a just act.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Socrates' attempt to destroy the Laws in return is nothing but the act of retaliation Socrates himself sternly repudiated. The bitter irony put into the Laws' last comment, 'you the man who really cares about virtue?' (51a7),<sup>32</sup> seems to go better with our interpretation.

But if the model of justice the Laws endorse is the principle of 'persuade or obey', we then face a question immediately: why did the Laws refer not only to child but also to slave, which hardly agrees with the Laws' arguments that follow? Many interpreters read here an expression of the Laws' authoritarianism. But the

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Woozley's 'benefits argument' (Woozley (1979, pp.64–70)); Kraut (1984, pp.45–51) (though I cannot agree with his interpretation of 50c1–2 (his (B)) and 50c5–7 (his (C))). See also Weiss (1998, pp.98–100), for the contrary view.

<sup>30</sup> As is often pointed out, καθ' ὅσον δύνασαι (51a5) and τὸ σὸν μέρος (50b2) are to be taken to mean the same thing.

<sup>31</sup> Pace e.g. Weiss (1998, p.100).

<sup>32</sup> For the irony cf. Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.66); Burnet (1924, note on 51a6). See also 45d8–9. For some other interpretations of these words, cf. e.g. Weiss (1998, p.103); Stokes (2005, p.136).

Laws may have referred to slave from a different intention. Both children and slaves owe somehow their existence, nurture and education to their parents and masters (even though in a very different way), and just in this sense it is possible analogically to apply the master/slave relation to citizens. In this analogy the retaliation, which is not allowed to children, is definitely not allowed to slaves either. But is every act that is allowed to children allowed also to slaves? Here the master/slave relation must stand outside the argument based on this analogy. Citizens must obey in principle the orders of the Laws just as children must obey their parents, but the principle of 'persuade or obey', endorsed by the Laws, allows or/and even obliges citizens (children) to try to persuade the Laws (parents) if they think the orders are not just or should not be obeyed. But this course of action is strictly closed to slaves. However unjust the master's orders appear, slaves simply must obey them, and the only possible alternative is to run away ('obey or run away'). Legitimate children and slaves are different in this very respect, even though both of them belong to the city in a somewhat analogous way. The reference to slave may be taken to be intended to point out this fundamental difference of position, and also the difference of 'what is just' between them. To run away is a choice for a desperate slave, not for a legitimate child of the city, which is why the Laws later hurl the utmost insulting words at Socrates, a free citizen of Athens, 'you are doing what the meanest slave would do by trying to run away' (52d1–2).<sup>33</sup>

## 4.6 'Persuade or Obey' Principle

### Argument (2)

Next the Laws argue as follows (51c6–53a8):

After giving all the citizens their share of all the good things, the Laws have offered the opportunity to go away wherever they like, if they are not pleased with the Laws and the city. Therefore, anyone who stays, seeing how the Laws judge and conduct other things in the city, has already agreed by action that he'll do whatever the Laws command.

Besides, the Laws do not harshly demand that he do whatever they command, but allow him one of two alternatives, either to persuade them or to do. Thus, he who does neither of these is doing injustice in three ways: not obeying the Laws as his parents; not obeying the Laws as his nurturers; having agreed to obey the Laws, neither obeying nor persuading them in case they are to blame.

These reproaches apply especially to Socrates, because more than anyone else he was pleased with the city and the Laws, and made this agreement with them. Besides, he was led into this agreement neither by compulsion nor by fraud nor by being forced to make up his mind in a short time. The fact that he did not leave Athens to live abroad for seventy years testifies that the city and the Laws pleased him so much.

The Laws thus admonish Socrates to abide by his compacts and agreements with them.

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<sup>33</sup> Pace Stokes (2005, p.130), who notes, 'this fleeting reappearance, at 52d2, a mere allusion in a flight of rhetoric, ... has little separate *argumentative* force'.

This argument by the Laws has also been the target of criticism: first, the Laws' grounds for the justice of agreements between them and Socrates principally relate to aspect (ii) (procedural aspect) of Proviso (J) in Principle (2); the Laws dare to claim, fraudulently, that just because the agreements were reached in a just way, their contents are just. If this were so, it would follow that Socrates (a citizen) must obey whatever unjust orders they give to him, as long as the procedure of agreements is just, but this would be too outrageous for Socrates to accept.

However, two things are to be noted here, concerning the content of the agreement: 'to do whatever the Laws command' (51e4–5). First, the Laws express the same content three times after this remark in a different form, which is 'to live in accordance with the Laws, as a free citizen' (52c1–2, d2–3, d5–6).<sup>34</sup> If this is the actual content of their agreement the Laws are thinking of, their claim is not outrageous but rather is well-founded. As long as citizens remain in a city as citizens (i.e. live as free citizens), they are naturally obliged to obey the city's laws, as our own experience shows (unless we adopt anarchism). In Argument (2) as well as in Argument (1) citizens and the Laws are understood as standing in such a relationship.

But in this relationship too, if the Laws' command has absolute authority, does it not follow that Socrates (a citizen) will have to obey whatever unjust things the Laws may order, and is this not in conflict with Socrates' Principle (1)? This second criticism of Argument (2) leads to our second point to be noted. That is to say, this command is always presented in the form of alternatives, 'persuade or do/obey' (51b4, b9–c1, e7–8, 52a1–3). What the Laws mean to claim is clearly that because the Laws have allowed a citizen to argue against them and to try to persuade them if he thinks their command is unjust, their orders are not those of the authoritative tyrant. But even in that case if the citizen's attempt ends in failure, he seems to be obliged to obey the Laws and do unjust things he is commanded to, as long as he remains in the city. Can Socrates accept this?

## 4.7 Socrates in the *Apology*

In relation to this question, interpreters who take the Laws' view in the *Crito* to be different from Socrates' own often have recourse to three passages in the *Apology*: Socrates' single opposition as a Council member against the trial *en bloc* of the generals of the naval battle of Arginusae (406 BCE) (32b1–c2); Socrates' single disobedience to the bidding of the Thirty to arrest Leon the Salaminian (404 BCE) (32c3–d8)<sup>35</sup>; Socrates' proclamation to the jury that even if they propose to release him on the condition of quitting doing philosophy, he will obey the God rather than

<sup>34</sup> In these texts πολιτεύεσθαι is employed in its most basic sense of 'live as a free citizen' (LSJ).

<sup>35</sup> As to the situations surrounding these two incidents and Socrates' relation to them, cf. e.g. Brickhouse and Smith (1989, pp.174–184).

them, never stopping philosophizing as long as he lives and is able to continue (29c7-d5).

All these texts express clearly Socrates' basic position that he will never do injustice, even if he is put to death. However, Socrates' words concerning the first incident (32b4-c2) can only be taken to indicate that Socrates did not stand against the laws, but tried to prevent unjust actions 'together with the law and what is just' (32b9), without fearing imprisonment or death.

It is the same with the second incident. Socrates says that then he showed not by word but by action that he did not care for death but cared with all his might not to do anything unjust or unholy (32c8-d4). Socrates says nothing that explicitly refers to the illegality of the Thirty's rule and their bidding, but for Socrates, who observed close by how the Thirty had got power, ruled the city by terror, and committed many crimes, it must have been too clear to mention.<sup>36</sup>

To understand the third passage (29c7-d5) correctly, it is necessary to fathom Socrates' intention of bringing up the possibility of the jurors proposing the counter-penalty of releasing him on the condition that he stop philosophizing. The fact is that the jurors didn't have such a legal authority.<sup>37</sup> This fact must have been known even to Socrates who said that it was the first time he had come before the court (17d1-2).<sup>38</sup> Thus the reference to the unreal proposal of the counter-penalty by the jurors needs to be understood rather in the context of Socrates' reply to Anytus' denunciatory address to him (29c1-30c2). Anytus' address (29c2-6), to which Socrates referred just before mentioning this unreal proposal, is constructed along the following reasoning (according to Socrates' summary): (S1) if Socrates is acquitted (A), he will not stop philosophizing (and young people will do what he teaches) (B); (S2) if young people do what he teaches (B), all of them will be utterly ruined (C); (S3) therefore, in order to evade (C), it is necessary to prevent (A) and put him to death. The way for Socrates or for the jurors to reject this conclusion (S3) is, then, either to deny (S1) or to deny (S2). Socrates must have been well aware that the jurors' expectation, if any, lies in the denial of (S1), and only there (cf. 29c9-d1). In fact, if Socrates had promised at this point of his speech, as the best tactic of the defendant, that if he were acquitted, he would stop philosophizing, the jurors would have gladly voted for innocence, with Anytus' prosecution becoming groundless. It is most likely that Socrates declared in this third passage the impossibility of denying (S1), having taken the jurors' feelings into account.<sup>39</sup> How about, then, the possibility of denying (S2)? For Socrates, (S2) is the most crucial point with which the whole trial is concerned. He continues to argue that the truth of the matter on (S2)

<sup>36</sup>For a detailed and persuasive argument on this point, cf. e.g. Brickhouse and Smith (1989, pp.185-193).

<sup>37</sup>Brickhouse and Smith argue that 'law and legal authority have *nothing whatever* to do with this passage, either in its assumptions or in its implications'. Cf. Brickhouse and Smith (1989, pp.137-153; 1994, pp.141-146).

<sup>38</sup>But Socrates seems to know very much about how trials proceed, considering his excuse. Cf. 34b7-d1, 35a4-7, 38d6-e2.

<sup>39</sup>*Apology* 37e3-4 appears to support this interpretation.



is contrary to what Anytus says (29d5-30b7), and concludes, ‘Therefore I would say to you, “Athenians, either obey Anytus, or not, and either acquit me, or not, knowing that I won’t do anything else, even if I am to die many times”’ (30b7-c2). Do these words of Socrates’ express any attitude on his part to the laws? If Socrates cannot persuade the jurors of his denial of (S2), Anytus’ argument will become valid. But he declares here that ‘even if he is to die many times’, that is to say, however many times he may be sentenced to death, he will never stop philosophizing, disobeying the God’s order. What he means is undoubtedly that in the situation where escape from the death sentence and escape from injustice (i.e. continuing philosophy) are incompatible, he will decisively choose the death sentence the plaintiff demands — just as established by the laws!<sup>40</sup> If this interpretation is correct, here too Socrates is acting not against, but in accordance with, the laws so as to stick to justice, which is the God’s order to him. Thus, what all these three passages testify is not Socrates’ confrontation with the Athenian laws in the attempt to follow Principle (1), but, on the contrary, the manifestation of his readiness to defend the laws, standing against any illegal action. There is thus no such inconsistency or opposition as is frequently pointed out between Socrates’ attitude in the *Apology* and the remarks of the Laws in the *Crito*.

## 4.8 What a ‘Just’ Action Consists in

Here let us pause for a moment and consider more widely and generally what kind of ‘just’ action people, including Socrates, can take, when those who are superior to or more powerful than themselves order them to do something. If they think what is ordered is just,<sup>41</sup> naturally it will be ‘just’ to ‘obey’ the order. If they consider it unjust or wrong, on the other hand, ‘to disobey’ will be just (as it was just for Socrates not to obey the bidding of the Thirty).<sup>42</sup> But there is also an alternative: to point out what’s wrong with the authority, and to try to persuade it so that it may change its mind. (What Socrates did as a Council member or as the accused in the court belongs to this alternative.) If they succeed in persuasion, the authority will change its mind, and justice will be maintained. However, if they fail, the choice

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<sup>40</sup> See *Crito* 52c6–8.

<sup>41</sup> Not ‘if what is ordered *is* just’. Interpreters often argue about the case where the Laws’ command *is* just (or unjust). But in principle at least, there cannot be such a case for anyone, especially for Socrates, who professes to be ignorant. There are of course a few cases where Socrates claims to have some ‘knowledge’ (e.g. ‘I do know that it is wrong and disgraceful to do injustice and to disobey one’s superior, whether god or man’, *Ap.* 29b6–7). But as to what action is just and who his superior is in each case, he always follows nothing else in him but the argument that on reflection seems best to him (*Cri.* 46b5–6).

<sup>42</sup> Socrates’ remark that he showed ‘not by word but by action’ (*Ap.* 32c8–d1) that he did care very much ‘not to do anything unjust or unholy’ suggests, if literally taken, that he may not have felt it necessary to attempt to persuade the Thirty, regarding them as unjustifiable power, or/and considering the attempt utterly useless.

they can take is then either to obey or to disobey the order. And in this case, too, 'to disobey' will be a just action. But because the wrongness of the authority has not been rectified, they have to be ready to be attacked by the authority concerning the just action taken (as Socrates was as a Council member).<sup>43</sup> To 'obey' the order, on the other hand, will not be just, generally speaking. However, there is one exception at least. Suppose they have previously agreed in a just way that one should obey the order in case one fails in persuasion, then the option of 'disobeying' is excluded, for it is an unjust action, violating their previous agreement. In this case only the option of 'obeying' remains as a just course of action.

What the Laws demand from Socrates in the relation between them and Socrates is the just action of this last case. That is to say, the sole issue whose answer is sought after here and now in the *Crito* — whether it is just or unjust for Socrates to try to escape — is, concretely speaking, the question of the validity of the decision once handed down in the court. And actually the Laws' first questioning to Socrates after their appearance, too, attacked this very point.

The trial of Socrates as well as of anyone else is the place where the right or the wrong is contested between the plaintiff and the defendant, and the decision is made through winning the case (succeeding in persuasion) or losing the case (failing in persuasion). However, whichever the result may be, both parties are obliged to obey the decision, once it is reached. It is not allowed selfishly to reject it or to disobey it, on the pretext that it is not pleasing (i.e. it seems unjust). This is the agreement between the laws and citizens (as long as they remain in the city as citizens), which constitutes the basic ground on which the system of court trial and also the existence of a city under the rule of law are founded; it is in this sense 'just' in the content of agreements (aspect (i) of Proviso (J)). The Laws warn Socrates that his attempt to escape is the act of undermining this most basic agreement, and in this sense the act of trying 'to destroy us, the Laws, and the entire city, so far as in you lies' (50b1–2), and 'the act of using violence' (51c1).

When we take into account this remark of the Laws', it seems reasonable enough for them to claim that the general fact that Socrates has enjoyed the benefit of living as a free citizen in this fatherland throughout his life testifies his 'agreement to them by action' (cf. 52d4–6). Besides, however, there is another thing that seems more clearly to testify Socrates' 'agreement by action', that is to say, his actual participation in the trial. As Crito's sigh in Part 1 (45e3–4) shows clearly, there were some means available (even illegal ones) to evade the trial itself, had he wanted it at all.<sup>44</sup> But he didn't do that, even though he must have been sure enough how the trial would result in that case.<sup>45</sup> Why? The only reason we can think of is that he endorsed

<sup>43</sup> As far as Socrates' words are concerned, there was for him no possibility of compromising with any injustice 'through fear of imprisonment or death' (*Ap.* 32c2). But cf. also 31e1–32a3, which suggests that Socrates looked at his mission for justice in a wider perspective.

<sup>44</sup> During the preliminary hearing he had enough chance to leave Athens if he wanted.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ap.* 19a4–5, 24a1–4, 36a2–5; also *Euthphr.* 3d9–e4.

so much the Athenian laws governing the trials, and wanted so much to abide by the agreements with the laws that he didn't mind the risk of death.<sup>46</sup>

## 4.9 The Status of the Laws

But there is another thing to be noted again: Socrates sharply distinguishes between the righteousness of the Laws' claim and the righteousness of the actual judgement. In Socrates' view his death sentence was evidently wrong and unjust. But it was not the laws but the jurors that handed it down. Therefore, the mere assertion of the injustice of the judgement (50c1–2) doesn't and cannot constitute any reason for rejecting the application of Principle (2) in his relation to the laws.

There are several passages in the *Apology* where Socrates clearly distinguishes between the laws and the jurors, referring at the same time to their proper relationship to be achieved (19a6–7, 35b10–c5). These passages seem exactly to correspond to the Laws' words in the peroration in the *Crito*, 'If you leave now, you will leave, having injustice done — not by us, the Laws, but by men' (54b9–c2). If our understanding is correct, this correspondence will certainly constitute evidence that the Laws' remark here is the reflection of Socrates' own thought (cf. *Ap.* 39a6–b7).

But in the *Crito* the Laws go forward to refer to the laws of Hades, who would not receive Socrates kindly, if Socrates would leave, having done injustice and wrong on himself, his friends, his fatherland and the Laws (54c2–d1). 'The laws of Hades' (54c7) are the absolute standards according to which 'those who rule there' (54b6) judge what the dead did while alive, as 'the true judges' (*Ap.* 41a2) in an infallible way. The Laws in the *Crito* call them 'our brothers'. This suggests that the Laws appearing in Part 3 of the *Crito* are not necessarily identical with the actual Athenian laws. Socrates certainly must have been well aware of various defects involved in the actual laws and judicial system of his fatherland.<sup>47</sup> But he doesn't seem to have made any attempt to examine them, or to 'persuade' and improve them. Adam sees here Socrates' 'absolute fidelity to the laws of his country', and says 'The fact is that Socrates' rationalism was only half-complete' (Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, pp. xiv–xv)). Leaving aside the question of whether to agree here with Adam or not, it is reasonable enough to assume that Socrates' attitude of refraining from touching the actual laws of Athens was very much influenced by the Daemonic sign strictly forbidding Socrates' engaging in political matters (cf. *Ap.* 31c4–32a3). However it may be, Socrates can be taken to have made the Laws of the *Crito* speak to him, not as the defective laws of the actual world, but as the Laws that procreate Athenian citizens, nurture, educate and bestow them with all the good things they are capable of providing, and also as the standards according to which citizens should live as free citizens in a just way (cf. *Cri.* 51c8–e5). But whatever Socrates thought of the Laws, one thing is certain: the Laws' arguments for the validity of the decisions

<sup>46</sup>Cf. *Cri.* 51b2–c1. Cf. also Colaiaco (2001, pp.194–195) for a somewhat similar view.

<sup>47</sup>Weiss (1998, pp.90–91) gives a brief summary of these defects.

reached are not such an un-Socratic and un-philosophic rhetoric, acceptable to the many, intended just to help Crito at an impasse, as separationists frequently maintain.<sup>48</sup> Indubitably, they are also Socrates' own.

## 4.10 Failure of 'Justice of Retaliation'

### Argument (3)

Lastly, the Laws argue that the act of escaping would not bring anything good to Socrates himself, nor to his friends and children, replying to each of the points, (C1), (C2), (C4), which Crito presented in Part 1 of the *Crito* (53b1–3, 53b3–54a2, 54a2–b2). This argument too has suffered harsh criticisms,<sup>49</sup> whose gist lies in taking the Laws to have lowered again the level of argument to the perspective of 'the many', which Crito brought up in Part 1 and Socrates explicitly set aside in Part 2 (48c2–d6). However, to judge the significance of Argument (3) properly, we need to infer the reason why the Laws brought it up. To look back at the discussion in the *Crito*, the Laws' arguments so far forced Crito, probably rather owing to their overwhelming power of eloquence, to accept the conclusion that Socrates' escape is the breaking of his own agreement with the Laws, and is therefore an unjust action, never to be attempted. But we saw above that there are some indications that Crito was not necessarily convinced of Socrates' Principle (1\*). It is actually very doubtful whether the whole arguments so far succeeded in making Crito shake off the opinion of the many on justice. It is true that he could not refute the conclusion of the Laws' arguments (52d8), but this conclusion had no direct connection with the issues he had raised in Part 1. Thus, without these issues cleared, it would be impossible for Crito to be *really* convinced of the unrighteousness of Socrates' escape. Argument (3) is taken to be intended to fill in this gap.<sup>50</sup>

This interpretation seems to go along with the Law's peroration (54b3–d2). In 54c2–d1 they conclude that the act of retaliation<sup>51</sup> by escaping, which Crito pro-

<sup>48</sup> Cf. e.g. Young (1974, pp.4–9, 24–29); Weiss (1998, pp.39–56, 81–83, 131–133, 146–158); Colaiaco (2001, pp.190–210); Harte (2005, pp.229–238, 243–247).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. e.g. Weiss (1998, pp.124–131); Miller (1996, pp.128–129); also Young (1974, pp.22–26).

<sup>50</sup> For example, the Laws' speech about Socrates' miserable life in exile (53b3–54a2), in reply to point (C2) (45b7–c5), which Crito had brought up on the basis of his total misunderstanding of Socrates' words in court (*Ap.* 37c4–e2), undoubtedly made Crito understand finally where the only life worth living for Socrates could be.

<sup>51</sup> The object of ἀνταδικήσας τε καὶ ἀντικακουργήσας (54c2–3) is to be taken to be the Laws (*pace* Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.79)). In their peroration the Laws are summing up the points where the claim of Socrates (actually, of Crito) was mistaken, bringing up the earlier arguments that he expressed or the Laws assumed him to have expressed (cf. 50c1–2 and 51a3–7). οὕτως αἰσχρῶς (so shamefully, 54c2) should be taken together with ἀνταδικήσας τε καὶ ἀντικακουργήσας (*pace* Adam (1893<sup>2</sup>, p.79) and Bernard (2016, pp.26, 136)), as an allusion to the 'double' shamefulfulness of doing an injustice 'in return' to the one who did *no* injustice to him, though this is for Stokes (2005, p.182) one of the 'dusty answers' which '[u]npractised readers, if they saw the problem, might

posed, is in its true reality nothing but the injustice of trampling on the agreements and compact Socrates himself made with them, and therefore (contrary to Crito's intention) turns out to be the act of working wrong on Socrates himself, his friends, his fatherland and the Laws, to whom he least of all ought to do wrong. That is to say, this peroration summing up Part 3 of the *Crito* can be seen as the declaration which makes it undeniably clear even to Crito that the view of the many on justice, advocated by Crito in Part 1, which consists in benefiting friends, harming enemies, and retaliating against enemies, is false and groundless, in contrast to Socrates' Principle (1\*), which will always remain true.

## 4.11 The Corybantic Effects

After the Laws' long arguments to persuade Socrates (in reality, Crito), a short dialogue between Socrates and Crito starts again, to close the whole dialogue of the *Crito* (54d3-e2). In this last conversation Socrates' comparison of the Laws' arguments to the sound of Corybantic pipes has drawn special attention of scholars. Especially, separationists read here an indication by Socrates (or Plato) that Socrates does not endorse the Laws' arguments, on the basis of their negative evaluation of the Corybantic rites and their effects on the participants, to which Plato refers here and elsewhere. Weiss (1998, pp. 134–145) and Harte (2005, pp. 229–231), for example, seem to be employing their pejorative reading of this passage as an important foothold for their interpretation of the Laws' arguments. But their negative reading of Corybantic rites and their effects itself seems rather to be conversely influenced by their derogatory view of the Laws' arguments. Their negative interpretation of this last dialogue has been persuasively refuted, as I believe, already by a detailed examination by Linforth (1946) of the Corybantic rites and the six passages where Plato refers to them in his dialogues, and also recently and directly by Stokes (2005, pp. 187–193) and by Wasmuth (2015).

Now, if the gist of the Corybantic simile by Socrates concerns the curative function of the last stage of the Corybantic rites, who is supposed to have been cured, and of what fear or affliction? Against Weiss' claim that it is only Crito that was cured by the Laws' arguments, Wasmuth argues that both Socrates and Crito were cured.<sup>52</sup> On this point I am in agreement with her, but when she says, 'If ... we think it not wholly unreasonable to worry about one's children being orphaned, the buzzing would provide a beneficial shield against the fear or worries Crito's arguments

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have accepted'. In the Laws' words that Socrates had injustice done 'by men' (54c1–2), 'men' refers to the jury or the jurors who voted against him. But because the Laws' speech so far nor the whole dialogue of the *Crito* has made no explicit mention of the role of the jurors, Crito might have considered 'men' more widely to be not only the jurors but also the accusers of Socrates in the past as well as in the present, and those who hate Socrates — those he called 'your enemies' (45c8).

<sup>52</sup>Wasmuth (2015, pp.82–84). Stokes (2005, p.189 with note 281), who is also against Weiss, claims that it must be Socrates (if anyone).

could inspire' (Wasmuth (2015, p.83)), she seems to take Socrates also to have shared in 'the fear or worries Crito's arguments could inspire'. But how much fear or worries could Crito's arguments have inspired in Socrates' mind? Socrates had already before the appearance of the Laws made it definitely clear that the opinion and power of the many brought up by Crito would never affect the λόγος that Socrates valued more than anything else (46b5–6; cf. also 46c3–6, 48c6–d6). Crito, on the other hand, who, staying just a witness, may not have been directly affected Corybantically by the Laws' arguments, could still hear and accept Socrates' words addressing his dear friend (54d3–8, cf. ὃ φίλε ἐταῖρε Κρίτων, d3). He could thereby share, as it were, indirectly in the curing effect of the Laws' arguments, thus being healed of the fear and worries that had been annoying him. At the beginning of the *Crito* he visited Socrates early in the dawn, very much distraught with great fear and worries, and was amazed by the serenity of Socrates, who had been sleeping peacefully. But at the end he seems to have regained his own calmness and self-possession, finally through the curative effect of the Laws', that is, Socrates' own arguments and words. When Socrates, having now clearly, and definitely rejected Crito's arguments trying to persuade Socrates to escape, encouraged him, saying, 'Still, if you think you can accomplish anything, speak', he could say nothing but 'I have nothing to say'.<sup>53</sup>

To return to Socrates' hearing the buzzing sound of the Laws' arguments, what fear and worries could he be cured of, if not of those which Crito's arguments would have inspired? In considering this question, a subtle difference in Socrates' attitude toward death between the *Apology* and the *Crito* may be suggestive. In the *Apology* his basic attitude is that of ignorance as to whether it is good or bad (37b6–7, cf. 29a5–c1). But he concludes that it may not be bad but good (40b–c), on the basis of his conviction that nothing bad will happen to good people, alive or dead, with divine care always accompanying them (cf. 41c9–d3), and also on the basis of the fact that the Daemonic sign, as an appearance of divine care, never opposed him in his words and deeds throughout the trial (40a2–c4, 41d5–6). Also as the reason for his great hope of death being a good thing, he argues that death is one of two things — either it is like nothingness without any awareness of anything, or a migration of the soul from this place to another, 'as they say' (40c8) —, and that in either case nothing can be better than death (40c–e). But here the latter alternative (life after death) is a mere supposition expressed with a condition, 'if what they say is true' (40e4–6). With this concept of death in mind, Socrates' remark 'whether I am courageous in the face of death or not is another matter' (34e1–2) seems to be his honest confession.

In the Law's peroration (*Cri.* 54b3–d2), on the other hand, Socrates no longer makes any mention of the possibility of death being nothingness. He rather sees death as the place for trial of the dead concerning all of their deeds in this world. Socrates was sentenced unjustly to death by the jurors in this world, 'those who

<sup>53</sup> Crito's recovery of calmness will naturally lead to his kind and minute care expressed in the *Phaedo* for Socrates and his family on his last day, even though he cannot help showing his character here and there in the *Phaedo*.

claim to be jurors' (*Ap.* 41a1–2). He says in the *Apology*, 'I suppose it had to be this way, and I think it is appropriate' (39b7–8), and declares that he will accept the penalty (39b6–7). But what will become of the justice he has believed in all through his life and continued seeking after? If the justice he has endeavoured to achieve in this world would perish together with him in his death, might his whole life accompanied by his faith in justice turn out to be meaningless? One of the most pressing questions he had to solve while he stayed in prison (in this world) seems to have been the question whether the only way for him to attain justice is to accept the death sentence and leave the search for justice — which he claimed repeatedly in the *Apology* to be the order of the God, and therefore never to be abandoned (cf. *Ap.* 28e4–6, 29d3–30a7, 33c4–7, 37e3–38a1). And he seems to have found his solution in the faith in the divine justice that rules beyond the boundary of human life and death and in the conviction that the redeeming of justice unjustly trampled is only achievable through his death, thus allowing him to leave this world peacefully, entrusting his friends with his unfinished task.

In the *Apology* after being sentenced to death Socrates addresses to those who voted for him as his friends and 'judges', and talks to them — mainly to cure them of their fear and worries and encourage them — about divine care given to humans, alive or dead, about the soul's life after death, and also about his high hope for just judgement in the world yonder. In the *Crito* these ideas seem to be recapitulated in a more determinate form in the Laws' peroration. The Laws' arguments must have been such that could dispel any vestige of fear and worries and give him serenity of mind.<sup>54</sup> Socrates' attempt to persuade Crito began with, 'Well, Crito, this may be some good fortune. If this is what the gods want, so be it' (43d7–8), thus ends with 'Then, Crito, let us so act in this way, since this is the way the God leads us' (54e1–2).

## 4.12 The *Crito* as a Sequel to the *Apology*

We have tried to follow our basic principle of reading the *Crito* as simply as possible and gaining the integral understanding of the dialogue. As its interim result we can say that the separation view rather prevents the understanding of Socratic position that is consistently maintained all through the *Apology* and the whole of the *Crito*. In the *Apology* Socrates repeated that he didn't have time enough to remove the misunderstanding of the Athenians and persuade them of his real intentions (*Ap.* 37a7–b2; cf. also 18e5–19a5, 24a1–4). The *Crito* seems to have been Plato's attempt to prepare that time and place for Socrates, and for himself as well: Why did Socrates die? — why did he undergo the trial which he could have evaded?; why, at his trial,

<sup>54</sup>Weiss (1998, pp.128–133, 152–154, 166–167) regards the Laws' peroration as a sheer 'threat'. It is quite natural that the Laws, who admonish Socrates against escaping, tend more to mention the consequences from his injustice. But we can read easily that the opposite consequences are implied behind for Socrates' whole life of defending justice.



did he not propose the penalty of exile, which would have enabled him legally to leave the city? (*Ap.* 37c4–5; *Cri.* 52c4–6); why did he definitely refuse to survive as his friends so eagerly wanted him to do, and to escape, as was almost a commonplace in Athenian life?; what is injustice, which he refused, and what is justice, which he tried to defend, sacrificing his life? — In the *Crito* Plato tried to answer all these questions surrounding Socrates' death, the questions Socrates had left for solution after his death. If this line of interpretation is acceptable, the *Crito* will be regarded as a sequel to the *Apology* in a sense different from Grote's reading.

However, the answers Plato gave when writing the *Crito* were for him, certainly, only interim answers at that moment.<sup>55</sup> Two main directions of problem indicated in the *Crito* — the question of justice in the relationship between city (its laws) and citizen and the question of the soul's immortality — will be pursued hereafter in the philosophical arguments and the myths of afterlife in Plato's dialogues, especially the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Politicus* and *Laws*, to grow into fruits of his own philosophy.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> It may have been no other person than Plato himself who imagined himself hearing the buzzing sound of the Corybantic pipes.

<sup>56</sup> We, Yahei and I, are deeply grateful to M.D. Boeri for his kind hospitality that allowed us to visit Chile from the opposite side of the globe to share the joy of working on Greek philosophy with fellow scholars in Latin America, which has resulted in this book. Also I express profound thanks to G.R.F. Ferrari for reading and making many helpful comments on the original version of this paper.

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# Chapter 5

## Plato's Wax Tablet



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**Abstract** The writing device Plato employed for his inquiry was a wax tablet. The criticism against writing in the *Phaedrus* is directed to the wrong use of papyrus scrolls and of the mnemonic technique relying on images planted in the wax tablet of the mind. Plato's Recollection is not the retrieval of what is stored in the mind, but the construction of cognitive networks through exploration. For this purpose the wax tablet was especially appropriate. Plato's reflection on it led him to the Wax Block in Part 2 of the *Theaetetus* and to the Scribe and the Illustrator in the *Philebus*. The former ends in failure, because it is a block, not a tablet. Another model in Part 2, the Aviary, comes from the image of a library full of papyrus scrolls. It ends in failure, because it takes knowledge to consist in having a bird (an unopened scroll) in hand. What Plato understood as knowledge was the type of comprehension Tiresias the augur had acquired concerning flying patterns of birds, after painstaking observation, using his writing tablet, while for Olympian gods the world itself was such a tablet. Collection and Division is crucial for the approach to this divine ideal. Part 3 of the *Theaetetus* fails to define knowledge, because it neglects the role of Division.

### 5.1 Writing Tablets

Plato is reported to have died at the age of 81, while engaging in writing (Cicero, *De Senectute* 5.13). He continued 'combing and curling' his dialogues, the stories of his love of labour being widely known, especially that of the tablet (δέλτος) found after his death, showing the beginning of the *Republic* arranged in varying order.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Compositione Verborum* 25.207–218 (Usener and Radermacher); also Diogenes Laertius III 37; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII 6.64. Cf. Pl. *R.* 327a1–2. Although Dionysius cites the first eight words, it is not certain exactly how much of the first part is in question here. In considering this question, scholars tend to focus on stylistic principles of rhythm and period (e.g. Demetrius of Phaleron, *On Style* 21, 205; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*

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This story may be a fiction, but Plato certainly employed a tablet in his inquiry and writing.

Paper, as we know today, being unavailable, Greeks used such writing materials as papyrus, parchment, ostraca, linen, stone, tablets (wooden, clay, gold, silver, or bronze).<sup>2</sup> They marked signs on them by using ink or by scratching. There are several Greek words for the writing tablet: πίναξ, πινακίς, πινάκιον, πινακίδιον, δέλτος, δελτίον, πυκτίον, πυξίον, πυξίδιον, γραμματεῖον, γραμματείδιον, and in Latin *tabula* or *tabella*, and also *cera* (wax) if it is a wax tablet.<sup>3</sup>

Among the words representing a writing tablet, πίναξ was a word used also to represent a map: the first map by Anaximander was a πίναξ (12A6 DK). Plutarch's *Theseus* 1 begins with reference to geographical πίνακες on which some additional comments are written in the outermost parts, like 'What lies beyond are deserts ...' As to δέλτος, when Prometheus foretold Io's wandering, he told her to write it in her memory tablets of mind (δέλτοις, Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 789). Just as the πίνακες in Plutarch's *Theseus* contained visual and verbal information of the deserts, Io's mind tablets are supposed to have contained Prometheus' verbal and map-like information concerning her wandering.

The expression 'memory tablets of mind' suggests that memories were imagined by Greeks as incised or written in a mental tablet. Just as a computer (its RAM and HDD) is now employed as the model of human memory, a new device with big storage capacity (writing material) was employed in ancient Greece as a model of memory.

For the Greeks the wooden tablet was one of the oldest writing materials, probably borrowed from the Hittites. In Homer's *Iliad* (VI 168–170) Proetus, who planned Bellerophon's death, wrote (γράφας) baneful tokens in a foldable tablet (πίνακι πυκτῷ), probably wooden, and sent him to Lycia, telling him to show it to the king, Proetus' stepfather. Whereas ink was used for papyrus, for a wooden tablet not only ink or chalk but also scratching was employed<sup>4</sup>; the verb γράφειν (write) originally meant 'scratch'.

Scratching was the most appropriate (or the only) way for writing on wax. The wax tablet was a wooden board whose surface was hollowed out, leaving a narrow rim around the edge, so as to be filled with mixture of beeswax and pitch, μάλθα, sometimes black, sometimes red. Demosthenes says, 'those who testify to challenges ... on the spur of the moment should present their testimony written in μάλθα, so as to be able to add or erase easily' (46.11). This is easy on a wax tablet, because writing is scratching, using the pointed end of a stylus, made of wood, bone or bronze, and erasing is smoothing out with its flat end.<sup>5</sup>

VIII 6.64; cf. Denniston (1952, p. 41); Fraser (2002, pp. 54–55)), but Plato's intention is much wider, as is clear from the fact that the first word, κατέβην, hints at the descent into the Cave in Book VII (cf. Clay (1992, p. 127); Burnyeat (1997, pp. 4–8)).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Bülow-Jacobsen (2009).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Bülow-Jacobsen (2009, p. 11), whose list is a little different from mine.

<sup>4</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, p.11).

<sup>5</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, pp. 11–12); Bülow-Jacobsen (2009, p. 11); Criore (2009, p.323).

A wax tablet often had a small raised surface left in its centre to prevent the writing on the wax from being damaged when the tablet was closed.<sup>6</sup> This means that a wooden tablet, waxed or not, was used not only as an individual piece but also as a sort of codex. The tablet Proetus handed to Bellerophon was a foldable tablet (Homer, *Iliad* VI 169), 'foldable' (πτυκτός) coming from the noun πτύξ or πτυχή (layer, plate). Pollux (*Onomasticon* X 57–58) refers to γραμματείδιον δίθυρον (diptych) ἢ τρίπτυχον (triptych) ἢ καὶ πλείονων πτυχῶν (tablet of more layers). In Euripides' works, letters to do with Iphigeneia's life and death (*Iphigenia in Aulis* 98, 112, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 760) and the writing device of Zeus (Fr.506) were 'layers of tablet' (δέλτου πτυχαί), a kind of codex, or a 'concertina tablet',<sup>7</sup> which was made by tying together several diptychs. They were produced by drilling holes in the edge of wooden boards (whitened or not) or wax tablets, and by joining them together with a string or a leather thong passed through the holes. When making a codex of wax tablets, it was possible to hollow out and wax both sides of the plates between the first and the last, thus making a 'note-book'. In this case ten leaves (18 pages between covers) seem to have been the maximum because of the nature of the material,<sup>8</sup> but there may have been books with as many as fifteen leaves (28 pages).<sup>9</sup>

Papyrus scrolls, manufactured in Egypt and began to appear on Attic vases from around 500 BCE,<sup>10</sup> could be also used in the form of layers, though sold in roll form; a sheet of appropriate size was cut off from a manufactured roll.<sup>11</sup> Contrary to the often made misconception that papyrus was brittle and fragile, papyrus of good quality was extremely strong and flexible. If ancient Greeks had wanted, they could have made it into a note-book in codex form,<sup>12</sup> but no evidence is found. The parchment note-book was a Roman invention,<sup>13</sup> and Caesar may have been the first to use the papyrus note-book.<sup>14</sup> But in codex form or not, the expression 'layers of *bibloi*' (πτυχαῖς βιβλίων) appears in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* (946–947), side by side with 'tablets' (πίναξιν). 'Layers of *bibloi* (papyri)' may have been a kind of papyrus codex,<sup>15</sup> as 'tablets' in plural could represent 'tablets' joined together with a string.

In respect of water solubility and fading by light, there were three types of ink: (1) the carbon ink type, not soluble in water nor damaged by sunlight; (2) the iron-gall type, not soluble in water, but damaged by sunlight; (3) the mixture of them, soluble in water and damaged by sunlight.<sup>16</sup> Thus it was possible to reuse papyrus by washing off soluble ink.

<sup>6</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, p. 11).

<sup>7</sup>Bülow-Jacobsen (2009, pp. 11–14, 23); Cribiore (2009, p.323).

<sup>8</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, p.12); Cribiore (2009, p.323).

<sup>9</sup>Bülow-Jacobsen (2009, p.23).

<sup>10</sup>Hornblower and Spawforth (1996<sup>3</sup>, pp. 250–251).

<sup>11</sup>Johnson (2009, p.265).

<sup>12</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, pp. 5, 7).

<sup>13</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, p. 22).

<sup>14</sup>Roberts and Skeat (1983, pp. 19, 24).

<sup>15</sup>As a similar but a little different expression, cf. γραμμάτων πτυχάς (Sophocles, Fr.144).

<sup>16</sup>Frösén (2009, p.82).

Concerning these writing devices there are two interesting things to note. First, to the Greeks of the classical age the tablet had a dignity that the papyrus scroll lacked: gods are represented as using tablets (δέλτοι, διφθέραι, ὄστρακα, σκυτάλαι), not βίβλοι (papyrus scrolls).<sup>17</sup>

Second, Quintilian, making a comparison between the wax tablet and the parchment, gives the former a higher rating for inquiry.<sup>18</sup>

It is best to write on a wax tablet, where the manner of erasing is easiest ... the use of parchment delays the hand and weakens the force of thought, through the frequent carrying back of the hand when the reed pen is dipped. (*Institutio Oratoria* X 3.31)

Although Dionysius of Halicarnassus does not specify what kind of tablet Plato used (*De Compositione Verborum* 25.207–218), Quintilian explicitly states that it was a wax tablet (*Institutio Oratoria* VIII 6.64). According to Diogenes Laertius III 37, ‘Some say that Philippus of Opus transcribed his *Laws* that were in wax’. ‘His’ in ‘his *Laws*’ may represent Plato or Philippus. I think that Plato, who died while engaging in writing (Cicero, *De Senectute* 5.13), had no time to transcribe (or make a scribe transcribe under his supervision) into papyrus scrolls what he had written on wax tablets, and Philippus did the job. We can imagine Plato having a large stock of writing wax tablets, in one of which he arranged the beginning of the *Republic* in varying order.

## 5.2 Writing and Inquiry in Greece

About 750 BCE, or still earlier, Greeks invented the alphabet consisting of 24 signs of vowels and consonants, which enabled them articulately to write down whatever they thought about. This easy system of writing made it possible to communicate beyond time and space, giving rise to ‘inquiry’ (ἱστορία, ἱστορίη) of the past (history) and distant places (geography).

‘Inquiry’ which writing helped to develop was not limited to the increase of historical and geographical knowledge. According to Bartlett’s ‘schema theory’, we perceive and encode information into our memory in terms of our past experience and understanding of the world. Under the influence which he calls an ‘effort after meaning’, the original tale receives insertion, deletion, modification and distortion, so as to become a meaningful whole.<sup>19</sup> Change is hardly noticed in non-literate societies, for whatever has social relevance is stored in the memory, the rest is forgotten, and there is no document with which to check it.<sup>20</sup> In non-literate societies ‘the whole concept of an original is out of place’,<sup>21</sup> and the absence of the original can

<sup>17</sup> Roberts and Skeat (1983, p.11 with note 3). Cf. Euripides, Fr.506; Sophocles, Fr. 144.

<sup>18</sup> Bülow-Jacobsen (2009, p.12 and p.26, note 26).

<sup>19</sup> Bartlett (1932, p.65, Chapter X, pp. 197–214); Goody and Watt (1963, p.307).

<sup>20</sup> Goody and Watt (1963, pp. 306–307).

<sup>21</sup> Goody (1987, p. 170).

lead to the absence of the target or the basis of criticism. Writing enabled people to have such fixed points, creating the history of criticism.

In non-literate societies any new information easily becomes anonymous, while people in literate societies can leave a finding to posterity with their names attached to it, establishing thus their immortal fame through their spiritual offspring (cf. *Pl. Smp.* 208c-209e). The first eminent historians, Hecataeus, Herodotus, and Thucydides put their names at the beginning of their works with some pride in their offspring.

The contribution of writing to Greek civilization was enormous. Plato himself admits this, referring to the Egyptian's preservation of the written texts concerning ancient Athens and Atlantis, and expressing favourable opinion about writing (*Ti.* 23a, e; *Criti.* 113a-b). Theuth's high evaluation of writing as the medicine of memory in the *Phaedrus* (274e) must reflect this good appreciation of writing. However, Plato makes Ammon criticize Theuth and warn that writing will rather make people forgetful (274e-275a). What is the point of this criticism?

### 5.3 Phaedrus and Greek Mnemonics

The beginning of the *Phaedrus* is instructive in this respect. Socrates meets Phaedrus going for a walk out of the wall, and learns from him about Lysias' speech advising the beloved to grant favours to the one who is not in love (*Phdr.* 227a-d). Although Phaedrus says that he cannot relate it from memory, Socrates detects the following things: from early morning Phaedrus asked Lysias again and again to deliver the speech and Lysias gladly obeyed; but Phaedrus, still unsatisfied, took the scroll and began to study it, and after knowing the speech by heart, he went out for a walk; he then met Socrates to his delight, finding the subject on whom to practice it (228a-c). Socrates thus urges Phaedrus to recite Lysias' speech, but Phaedrus modestly says, 'I have not at all learnt it word by word (ῥήματα); instead, I will give its general thought (διάνοιαν), listing all the points in which Lysias said the lover differs from the non-lover, giving them in summary, in the proper order (ἐφεξῆς), beginning with the first' (228d2-5).<sup>22</sup> However, Socrates, well aware that Phaedrus has in his left hand, under his cloak, the papyrus scroll hidden, says that although he loves Phaedrus, he will not offer himself as the subject of practice, when Lysias is present (228d-e).

This short conversation contains interesting lessons:

- (1) Phaedrus judged that the memorization of Lysias' speech is served better by having the written thing at hand than merely listening to it.<sup>23</sup> Visual aid is certainly helpful for memorization, as Quintilian refers to the visualization of the text by actual writing (*Institutio Oratoria* XI 2.32).

<sup>22</sup> On this passage cf. Small (1997, p.205).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. a general comment by Goody (1987, p.234).



- (2) Socrates regarded the written speech under Phaedrus' cloak as Lysias himself.
- (3) The desire to become able to recite Lysias' speech from memory in a way worthy of the author (228a2–3) made Phaedrus study it very hard (b2–3). The general thought is easy to memorize, but to remember the text word by word is extremely difficult.

This difficulty of word memorization is one of the points Alcidas makes in his work that emphasizes the superiority of making speeches on the spot, denouncing carefully prepared written speeches, in a way somewhat similar to Ammon's criticism of writing (*On the Sophists* 18–21 (Radermacher)). Alcidas wrote this work as an antithesis to Isocrates' *Against the Sophists*, and Plato is likely to have had it in mind when writing the *Phaedrus*.

Socrates guesses that Phaedrus spent the whole morning to memorize Lysias' speech, all the time in a sitting posture; when exhausted, he decided, having already learnt the speech by heart, to go for a walk out of the wall to practice (*Phdr.* 228b2–6). Although 'exhausted' (228b3) may suggest that Phaedrus desired refreshment (cf. 227a6–b1), he went out actually 'to practice' (228b6). In Aristophanes' *Knights* (348–350) the Paphlagonian refers to the Sausage-Seller's talking to himself to memorize his speech while walking down the street, after spending the whole night repeating it. The combination of practice in a room and practice in a refreshing atmosphere, while walking, seems to have been an effective way for word by word memorization.

There is an interesting story concerning the invention of Greek mnemonics. Simonides of Ceos was commissioned to write an ode for some patron. But because he praised so much the Dioscuri in his poem, the patron refused to pay the whole fee. When the celebration was continuing in the hall, Simonides was called away by a message that two young men requested to see him. He went out but found nobody, while the hall collapsed when he was away, making the bodies of the banqueters unrecognizable. But Simonides could recall who sat where, and this success led him to the discovery of his mnemonics.<sup>24</sup> It is explained by Cicero as follows.

Simonides inferred that people who try to practice this natural faculty should select places (*loci*) and mould in mind things which they want to keep in memory, and arrange them in those places, so that it may turn out for the order of places to retain the order of things, and for the moulded image of things to indicate things themselves, and for us to make use of places as wax [a wax tablet], and of likenesses as letters. (*De Oratore* 2.354)

This technique advises us to visualize natural or artificial small scale scenes, and plant in various places various images as triggers for recollection, one after another in order, as if writing letters on a wax tablet. When recollecting, then, we move from one place to another successively in whichever direction we like, collecting images we have planted, as if reading a text on a wax tablet.<sup>25</sup> The more impressive the

<sup>24</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.351–4. Cf. Yates (1992, pp. 17–22); Goody (1987, pp. 180–182); Small (1997, pp. 82–85); Foster (2009, p. 124); Clay (2011, pp. 110–111).

<sup>25</sup> As to the details, cf. Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.351–360; Pseudo-Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.28–40 (3.30 refers not only to a wax tablet but also to papyrus); Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*

images are, the better; it is possible to employ even places of imagination as well as real scenes (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* XI 2.21).

If they are imagined places, it is not necessary to walk around physically when memorizing. But it sometimes happens that the places we have prepared are not numerous enough to accommodate many images. Then it becomes necessary to add more places (Pseudo-Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.30). The region where the places are arranged should be deserted rather than crowded, so that images may not be mixed; the form and nature of places should differ from one another, so that their resemblance may not confound us (3.31); they had better be separated with the interval of about thirty feet, because the mind-eye is less powerful when what is to be seen is too near or too far away (3.32). Thus, even Lysias' short speech about four Stephanus pages long, consisting of about 1100 words (Pl. *Phdr.* 230e6-234c5), needs a vast space with many places, if one tries to memorize it word by word. Its *verbatim* memorization would have been as hard as the memorization of the catalogue of ships, consisting of about 1500 words (Homer, *Iliad* II 494–759), or more difficult, because it is prose, not verse, and, on top of that, haphazard and ill-connected (*Phdr.* 264d-e, cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* XI 2.39). Seeking for places, ancient mnemonists employed a dwelling house, public buildings, a long road, an open space around the city wall, and pictures and fanciful places (*Institutio Oratoria* XI 2.21). What Phaedrus chose was an open space around the city wall.

## 5.4 The Journeys of Phaedrus and Plato

However, even though it may become a counter argument against Ammon's negative view on writing to point out the positive effect of the wax tablet for memorization, it does not teach us why Plato presented the criticism. To consider this question, let us see its main points:

- (A1) Theuth's invention will produce forgetting in the souls of people, because they neglect the practice/care of memory, trusting in written texts produced by external characters, and not trying to recollect from inside. It is not a medicine for memory but for reminding. (*Phdr.* 274e-275a)
- (A2) Having heard much without instruction, people become hard to get along with, becoming wise in their conceit. (275a-b)
- (A3) Writing resembles painting. Its offspring stand as if living, but when someone asks it questions, it keeps a solemn silence, always giving the same signs. (275d)
- (A4) Once written, it goes anywhere, even to those to whom it should not go, and when it is wronged, it cannot defend itself, its father not being nearby. (275d-e)

What looks like criticism may contain what turns out to be an appreciation. According to (A1), even though writing is not a medicine for memory, it is a medi-

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XI 2 (XI 2.21 refers to a wax tablet); Yates (1992, pp. 17–22); Goody (1987, pp. 180–182). The proper order is referred to in Pl. *Phdr.* 228d4, too.

cine for reminding (275a5–6, 275d1). The man who has knowledge of just, beautiful and good things will not be serious about writing them in ink through a reed pen, but still he writes as an amusement, storing up reminders both for his own old age of forgetting, and also for everyone else who wants to follow in his footsteps (276c–d).

When Socrates calls writing ‘a medicine for reminding’, he uses the expression ‘Ammon’s prophecy’ (275c8) to designate his criticism. ‘Prophecy’ means, for one thing, that it predicts the future state of those who trust in writing: ‘it will produce forgetting’ (275a2–3). But it also implies that we should not complacently think that we know the meaning just by hearing or reading it. Writing, including what Plato wrote as the story of Theuth, cannot defend itself, and is easily misunderstood (cf. (A4)), unless we are careful enough to do everything to find its deep meaning, as Socrates did concerning the Delphic oracle of his wisdom. We must not do wrong to this story, especially if its father, Plato, is not nearby.

In (A2) Socrates said that people become hard to get along with, having heard much (275a–b). The word πολυήκοοι (having *heard* much, 275a7) is suggestive. Phaedrus is a person who likes to hear much. He wanted to hear many likely theories by wise people about such legends as the carrying off of Oreithyia by Boreas, leaving aside the vital question of knowing himself (229c–230a). This basic attitude of his is reflected in his interest in the identity of the author of the story of Theuth, which he betrays by saying that Socrates is good at making up Egyptian stories (275b3–4). Socrates teasingly criticises him, saying that he should consider only whether what is said is true or not (275b–c). Phaedrus accepts Socrates’ admonition and says, ‘It seems to me that things about writing are as the Theban king says’ (275c3–4), betraying again that the authority of the speaker is still important for him.

His eagerness to listen is reflected also in his asking Lysias again and again to repeat his speech. However, he was not satisfied with listening. He thus borrowed the scroll and read the parts he especially wanted to inspect (228a–b). In fact people become πολυήκοοι (having heard much) not only by hearing but also by reading. In 275a–b Plato is employing this expression to refer to those who have read much. When we read something, we feel as if we hear its author speaking. Phaedrus said to Socrates, after reading Lysias’ book, ‘Does it not seem to you to be extraordinarily well spoken (εἰρησθαί), especially in its choice of words?’ (234c6–7). Phaedrus and Socrates took what was read as something spoken (234e2, 235a4–5, 7–8, 235b2, 4). The point of Ammon’s prophecy does not lie in whether something is written or spoken. ‘Much hearing’, which we can paraphrase as ‘much learning through hearing as well as reading’, is to be criticized. In this sense, the message of Ammon’s prophecy is similar to Heraclitus’ aphorism: ‘Much learning does not teach men to have νόος (understanding)’ (22B40 DK).

Thus, what Socrates emphasizes in (A1) is not to practice memory techniques so as to have a vast memory capacity. No matter how much we memorize some work, it ‘does not allow the original author to respond to questions if he is not present’, and in this respect it ‘is like the silent page of writing’, as Small points out (cf.

(A3)).<sup>26</sup> However, curiously enough, Socrates regards the written work of Lysias as Lysias himself (228e1). Does this mean that the silent work can somehow respond to questions? When Socrates compares writing to a painting, and says that it always gives the same signs, he seems to be pointing out its defect. However, whether one can learn from the same signs or not depends upon the capacity of each reader: people in old days could learn from the words of an oak at Dodona or even from a stone (275b5-c1). When we take into account not merely the passage that compares writing to a painting but the whole work of the *Phaedrus*, we notice that its always giving the same signs is a great merit, for it allows people to return to some specific passage and check any time they like. It actually enabled Socrates and Phaedrus to discover (1) that Lysias began his speech without defining 'love', and (2) that it resembles the words inscribed on the tomb of Midas, having no orderly articulation of its parts (262c-264e).

When Socrates makes Phaedrus repeat the beginning of Lysias' speech twice (262e, 263e-264a), there is something curious happening in the text. The word order of these two texts is different from that of Phaedrus' first reading (230e-231a), with γενομένων τούτων in 230e7, and τούτων γενομένων in 262e2 and 263e7. The fact that this is the place where the same text should be repeated suggests that Plato intentionally changed the order, to indicate that without written texts, always giving the same signs, we may easily miss small differences.

The defects of writing specified in (A1), (A2), and (A4) above come from the negligence on our part: want of the practice/care of memory; trust in written texts; negligence of the attempt to recollect from inside; conceit; ill-treatment. We saw defect (A3) can become a merit, and if it remains to be a defect, it is because we don't take the trouble to ask other questions and to look at other places of the text, where other useful signs may be found. Just as Socrates regarded Lysias' writing as Lysias himself, we are asked by Plato to regard his writing as himself.

Phaedrus, who took the trouble to memorize Lysias' speech, can be regarded as having practiced his memory in a sense (cf. 228b6), but only in a sense. What Plato regarded as the practice/care of memory was totally different. For Plato memory was not the preservation of something stored in the soul, leaving it totally unmoved. According to the *Symposium* 208a3-7:

What we call practice (μελετᾶν) exists because knowledge is leaving us: forgetting (λήθη) is departure of knowledge, while practice (μελέτη) saves the knowledge by putting in a new memory (μνήμην) in place of the memory that went away, so that the knowledge seems to be the same.

We can observe the same message also in the *Theaetetus* 153b-c, where Socrates refers to practice (μελέτης), want of practice/care (ἀμελετησίας), and forgetting (ἐπιλανθάνεται). In all of the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Theaetetus* Socrates recommends the practice/care (μελέτη, μελετᾶν, *Smp.* 208a4-5, *Tht.* 153b10), which leads to the preservation of memory (μνήμη, *Smp.* 208a6, *Phdr.* 275a3, 5), and warns against the want of practice/care (ἀμελετησία, *Phdr.* 275a3, *Tht.* 153b11-c1),

<sup>26</sup> Small (1997, p.10).

which leads to the forgetting (λήθη, ἐπιλανθάνεται, *Smp.* 208a4, *Phdr.* 275a2, *Tht.* 153c2).

If we don't practice memory in Plato's sense, knowledge leaves us constantly, and forgetting prevails in our soul.<sup>27</sup> The mnemonic technique Phaedrus employed was of no use for the practice of memory Plato had in mind. The myth of Er in the *Republic* 621a-c refers to the forgetting that people to be born suffer by drinking more than the measure from the River of Want of Practice/Care (Ἀμέλητα, 621a5),<sup>28</sup> because of the lack of self-control by prudence (621a-c), after going through the terrible and stifling heat of the Plain of Forgetting (Λήθης πεδίου, 621a2-3). This place is completely opposite to the Plain of Truth (Ἀληθείας πεδίου) in the *Phaedrus* (248b6),<sup>29</sup> which is the place where the soul can see real beings in its journey with gods (248a-c), and what is to be retrieved through recollection (ἀνάμνησις, 249c2) is the very knowledge of these real beings seen in the Plain of Truth (249b-c). It must be retrieved because it has been forgotten at the moment of birth (*Phd.* 76d) through the process the story of Er mythically explains as the drinking too much from the River of 'Want of Care/Practice'.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to this what the mnemonic technique enabled Phaedrus to recollect from inside was what he himself had planted. Then, however much he recalls with the utmost practice of this technique, he is just picking up what he knew before.

Is writing helpful for us to approach the Plain of the Truth? Now, our processing capacity is limited, as is shown by the magical number seven plus or minus two, the number we can handle at one time.<sup>31</sup> Under this limited capacity of our memory, it is most urgent, if we want to go beyond this limit, to have recourse to such a device as a wax tablet. Plato is supposed to have made the most of his wax tablet, not only to carry out his philosophical inquiry, but also to store up reminders for his own old age of forgetting, and for everyone else to follow in his footsteps, consulting the reminders (276d-e). Plato calls the writing 'amusement' (276b5, d2, d8, e1, 277e6), but this amusement is all beautiful, not vulgar like drinking at a party (276d6). It is also to be noted that the product of this beautiful amusement is not lifeless. It has life, but its soft leaves last only short period of time, not because of the fault of the seed, but because of the garden of Adonis, which represents readers (276b).

Socrates' two speeches were also pieces of 'amusement' (265c8), but they were written by Plato to teach important lessons concerning love. Socrates' claim that what is written should be like a living creature, without lacking a head or feet or

<sup>27</sup> James (1890, p.661): 'In extreme old age it [the equilibrium of the old paths fading and the new ones forming in our brain] is upset in the reverse direction, and forgetting prevails over acquisition, or rather there is no acquisition'.

<sup>28</sup> It is also called 'the River of Forgetting' (*R.* 621c1).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii* II p.346.19-24 (Kroll); Adam (1963<sup>2</sup>, II p.461). This antithesis between the two Plains is confirmed by the etymological connection between λήθω/λανθάνω and ἀληθής (*Etymologicum Magnum* 62.51).

<sup>30</sup> On the interpretation that relates the myth of Er to Recollection, cf. Bosanquet (1895, pp. 412, 415-416).

<sup>31</sup> Miller (1956).

middle parts or extremities, with all those parts made to fit to each other and to the whole (264c2–5), suggests that Plato tried seriously and constantly to improve his own amusement on his wax tablet. The speech of Lysias, on the other hand, lacked 'combing and curling', and resembled rather the inscription on the tomb of Midas, where it makes no difference whether some verse is placed in the head part or in extremities (262c–264e).

Of course, it is ideal to gain the appropriate soul in which to cultivate knowledge through dialogue (276e). But it is not easy. This was why Plato opened his Academy and continued writing as his all beautiful amusement. For if such a work can be written as to enable readers to engage in a dialogue with various characters in various positions appearing in the work, and to approach truth through examining them, then those who have received the seeds from the work may be expected to bear other discourses that are capable of continuing this process of sowing and bearing (276e–277a).

The method Plato began in the *Phaedrus* to recommend his readers to employ was that of Collection and Division. Plato himself employs this method in the *Phaedrus* (266b) to define love, and then in the *Sophist* and the *Politicus* to define a sophist and a statesman. The *Sophist* begins with Theodorus' words, 'According to yesterday's agreement, Socrates, we've come ourselves' (216a1–2). 'Yesterday's agreement' refers to Socrates' remark in the *Theaetetus*, 'In the morning, Theodorus, let us meet here again' (210d4). The *Sophist* is clearly intended as the sequel to the *Theaetetus*, and in terms of composition too, the *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus* and *Philebus* are supposed to have been written in this order.

Among them the *Theaetetus* is special in its aporetic character, rejecting various suggestions somehow related with writing and memory: the models of memory as a wax block (191a8–196c9) and an aviary (196d1–200c6); Socrates' Dream which takes knowledge to consist in the ability to enumerate the elements (letters) of a syllable (201d8–206b12); the definition of knowledge as true judgement with λόγος in its second sense (the enumeration of elements) (206e4–208b10).

Another difference between the *Theaetetus* and the other dialogues is that the method of Collection and Division, which is highly valued in the latter, is rather neglected in the *Theaetetus*. The third sense of λόγος (specification of difference by which each thing differs from everything else) in Part 3 of the *Theaetetus* has some connection with Division, because 'difference' (διαφορά, 208d6) is a term that represents the specific difference by which the species belonging to the same genus are distinguished (cf. *Plt.* 285b2). However, the possibility to connect this sense of λόγος with Division is completely neglected when Socrates refers to the peculiarity of Theaetetus' snub-nosedness as the difference by which Theaetetus is distinguished from all the other snub-nosed people (209c). Does this neglect of Division have anything to do with the aporetic character of Part 2 and Part 3 of the *Theaetetus*?



## 5.5 The Wax Block, the Wax Tablet, and the Scribe and the Illustrator

In Part 2 of the *Theaetetus* Socrates presents the Wax Block and the Aviary to explain the existence of false judgement, but ends in failure. These models cannot explain conceptual mistakes, even though the Wax Block was partly successful in explaining perceptual mistakes.

The similarity between the wax tablet and the Wax Block has led most of the scholars, starting from Jowett, to employ the expression ‘tablet’ to refer to this model in translation or interpretation.<sup>32</sup> However, the model in the *Theaetetus* is certainly ‘block’, not ‘tablet’: what is left there as an image is limited to stamped imprints (192a4, 6, b3, 4). Their difference lies in the degree of control and initiative exercised by their possessor. Holding the wax under perceptions and thoughts (191d7) suggests a shade of control in the Wax Block, but it is inferior to the control conferred *via* the use of a stylus, the tool to scratch and erase on wax not only letters but also diagrams and pictures.

Aristotle has in mind the Wax Block of the *Theaetetus*, when he presents his model of mind in *De memoria*.<sup>33</sup> But his model is not a block but a tablet (450b21), on which diagrams and pictures are drawn with a stylus,<sup>34</sup> and impressions are stamped.<sup>35</sup> The failure of the Wax Block in explaining conceptual mistakes seems to come from the absence of the scribe who incises texts on the wax.

In Plato’s final model of memory, the Scribe and the Illustrator in the *Philebus* (38b6–41b7), Plato explains the possibility of false judgement. Error in perceptual judgement is explained, just as in the Wax Block, as a mismatch between what is perceived and a memory trace (38c–d). False conceptual judgement, which the Wax Block couldn’t explain, on the other hand, is explained as some distortion of facts resulting from the exchange of information between the Illustrator and the Scribe, the former supplying images and the latter texts.

The Scribe and the Illustrator are distinct workmen in our soul, and when the Scribe is working, writing down what we saw, the Illustrator has no role to play. But it sometimes happens that after we have left the place of actual perception,<sup>36</sup> the image of what we saw arises unintentionally or intentionally. This is the work of the Illustrator, who creates an image according to his understanding of what the Scribe

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jowett (1953<sup>4</sup>, p.294). To my knowledge it is only Campbell (1883<sup>2</sup>, p.181) and Burnyeat (cf. McCabe (1994, p.292, note 34)) that explicitly say that it is not ‘tablet’ but ‘block’.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pl. *Th.* 191c8–d2, 194c5–195a9; Arist. *Mem.* 449b6–8, 450a32–b11.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Arist. *Mem.* 450a2 (διαγράφειν), 3 (τριγωνον), 29–30, b16, 21, 23, 30, 32.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Arist. *Mem.* 450a31, 32, b5, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Ἀπ’ ... ἀπαγαγών (Pl. *Phlb.* 39b9–10) is often translated as ‘take away from’, and interpreted as meaning ‘derive’ or ‘abstract’ (Lorenz (2006, p.105); Frede (1993, pp. 43, 174); Thein (2012, pp. 126–127, 129–131); Moss (2012, p.266 and note 16). However, there is no use of ἀπάγειν in the sense of ‘derive’ in Plato. The verb rather implies ‘separation’, as is shown by its use together with χωρίζειν (Pl. *Phd.* 97b2). Hackforth’s translation (1972, p.75), ‘When we have got those opinions and assertions clear of the act of sight, or other sense ...’, is to be adopted.



wrote (*Phlb.* 39b9–c2). The Illustrator and the Scribe deal with not only things present and past but also things in the future (39c10–12). So a person may see the image of an abundance of gold coming into his possession, and expect in its train to have many pleasures; he even sees the image of rejoicing at himself immensely (40a9–12). However, are these expectations true? His judgement concerning his future state, which the Scribe in him writes down, receiving the image the Illustrator has created, will probably turn out false (40c9–d3).

The Scribe and the Illustrator in us work in two shifts rapidly, resting from work when the other is working. They exchange information incessantly, the Scribe turning what is perceived into words, the Illustrator turning it into an image, the Scribe turning it again into words, and both of them never stopping this process. The writing material on which they work is a papyrus scroll (βιβλίον), which represents the soul (38e12–13). A papyrus scroll is made of a long sheet and of one or two sticks at the end(s), around which the sheet is wound; the part visible to them is always small, due to unwinding at one end and winding at the other. In a blank part of this limited space the Scribe notes down some text; then the Illustrator creates its illustration in a blank space beside the text on the basis of his understanding of the text; then the Scribe turns the illustration into some new text beside the illustration. Neither of them can consult his partner, who is dormant when he is working. Nor can they check their own previous products, which are tucked away in the wound part of the scroll. Conceptual misjudgement can take place thus, when the Scribe writes down a mistaken account on the basis of his understanding of the illustration he sees in the space visible to him, or when the Illustrator creates a mistaken or ambiguous and misleading illustration on the basis of his understanding of the account he reads in the space visible to him.

The incessant exchange of information between the Scribe and the Illustrator is the process where knowledge is constantly leaving us and a new memory is put in place of the memory that has left (*Smp.* 208a3–7). In this process we cannot help making some modification of our understanding, and if we are bad and enemies of gods, we will be filled with more and more mistaken judgements, whereas if we are good and friends of gods, we will be able to improve the contents of our soul (the scroll), accumulating true accounts and true images of the world and ourselves (*Phlb.* 39e10–40c7). Plato is supposed to have arrived at this model, with the help of the Illustrator and the Scribe in him, the Illustrator creating the image of this model, and the Scribe turning it into the text of the *Philebus* 38b6–41b7.

## 5.6 The Aviary and the Alexandrian Library

When Theuth praised and Ammon criticized writing, they had in mind the papyrus scroll, as is clear from 'in ink through a reed pen' (*Phdr.* 276c7–8). The merits of a papyrus scroll are its lightness and storage capacity, which made Theuth call writing 'a medicine of memory', having in mind the storage capacity of each scroll as well as the huge number of scrolls kept in the temples of Egypt (cf. *Ti.* 23a). The

comparison sometimes made between the Aviary in the *Theaetetus* and a big library<sup>37</sup> is correct. Theuth, the inventor of writing, and Seshat (meaning ‘female scribe’, known as Mistress of the House of Books (library)) have strong associations with trapping and nets for catching birds, as is evident from a relief scene of the South Wall of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak. There Theuth and Seshat watch Horus, Ramesses II and Khnum trap birds in a clapnet.<sup>38</sup> Karnak was part of Thebes (the city of Ammon (Amun), cf. *Phdr.* 274d), and its Amun precinct had a large sacred lake artificially made for the sacred geese of Amun, measuring 120 m. by 77 m. With the rise of the sun aquatic birds in a nearby aviary flew to the lake and rested.

Netting birds (pieces of knowledge), putting them in the aviary, and catching them again from it (*Tht.* 197b-d, 199a) correspond, respectively, to the acquisition of new scrolls, their possession, and their retrieval. For their easy retrieval the proper arrangement was essential. ‘Aristotle was the first person ... to have gathered together papyrus scrolls and to have taught the kings in Egypt the arrangement of a library’ (Strabo XIII 1.54). Even though this may mean only that the Ptolemies were induced by Aristotle’s example to build the great Alexandrian library,<sup>39</sup> the fact that a pupil of Theophrastus, Demetrius of Phaleron, became a librarian at Alexandria suggests that Aristotle’s way of arranging scrolls in his library somehow influenced librarians in Egypt.

Concerning Aristotle’s collection of books, there is an interesting story:

Aristotle associated with Plato with so much love of labour (φιλοπόνως) that his house was called the house of a reader. For Plato often said, ‘Let’s go to the house of the reader (ὁ ἀναγνώστης)’, and when he was absent from the lecture, Plato used to shout aloud, ‘The mind (ὁ νοῦς, understanding) is absent; the lecture room is dull’.<sup>40</sup>

Aristotle entered the Academy in 367 BCE, when he was 17 years old, around the time when the *Phaedrus* was written. The nickname, ‘the reader’, reflects Aristotle’s eagerness to read books he collected from his youth onward, in the way that led finally to the largest library of his age.<sup>41</sup> But the role of ‘reader’ was often allocated to slaves (cf. Plutarch, *Crassus* 2.6). Interpreters, who take Ammon’s criticism of writing in the *Phaedrus* to be reflecting Plato’s negative attitude to ‘reading’, detect in ‘reader’ and the other nickname, ‘the mind’, Plato’s humorously critical attitude toward Aristotle,<sup>42</sup> or even his intention to make Aristotle the butt of jokes among his school mates.<sup>43</sup> But what Plato had in mind as ‘the house of the reader’, filled with books, was certainly an Egyptian temple full of scrolls (cf. *Ti.* 23a, e; *Criti.* 113a-b), where only a very limited number of elites educated as scribes

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Sorabji (2006, p.5, note 2); Foster (2009, p.6).

<sup>38</sup> Jasnow (2011, p.306).

<sup>39</sup> Blum (1991, p.63). Cf. also Jacob (2013, pp. 74–75).

<sup>40</sup> *Vita Aristotelis Marciana* 6–7 (Düring (1957, p.98)); cf. *Vita Aristotelis Latina* 6–7 (p.152), too. The references to ‘the reader’ and to ‘the mind’ are made also in *Vita Aristotelis Vulgata* 5 (p.132) and *Vita Aristotelis Syriaca I* 5 (p.185), respectively. Also cf. Riginos (1976, p.132).

<sup>41</sup> Blum (1991, pp. 22, 52).

<sup>42</sup> Düring (1957, pp. 108–109); cf. also Düring (1966, p.8).

<sup>43</sup> Blum (1991, p.53).

were capable and entitled to read, just as in Herodotus' report it was priests that recited from a papyrus scroll the names of 330 kings after the first king Min (II 100.1).

The driving force that made Aristotle collect so many scrolls and Plato comb and curl his dialogues on his wax tablet (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Compositione Verborum* 25.207–218) was the same love of labour (φιλοπονία, φιλοπόνως). Just to collect books for collection's sake may produce forgetting through negligence of memory (*Phdr.* 275a3). But what made Plato call Aristotle ὁ νοῦς (mind, understanding) was not his 'much learning' (cf. Heraclit. 22B40 DK), but his incomparable 'love of labour'. Aristotle's love of labour is represented above all in his perusing the literature and making excerpts<sup>44</sup> and diagrams.

It is necessary to select also from the written discourses, and to make diagrams (διαγράψας) about each kind, putting them down under separate headings, e.g. 'About Good', or 'About Animal', and if it comes to 'About Good', then about all good, beginning with 'what it is'. It is necessary to indicate in the margin also the opinions of individual thinkers, e.g. 'Empedocles said that the elements of bodies were four'. (*Top.* 105b12–17; cf. *EN* 1107a32–33; *EE* 1128a28–29)

Librarians at Alexandria also employed diagrams and excerpts, probably under some influence from Aristotle. The first Director of the Alexandrian Library was Zenodotus (born ca. 325 BCE).<sup>45</sup> In order to sort scrolls according to their nature, he tried to find out the contents of each scroll and to list the entry of each work (its author and title) on a *sillybos* (σίλλυβος, title tag or tab),<sup>46</sup> which is a strip of parchment (ca. 2 × 10 cm.), glued onto the upper edge of a scroll, to be hung down when the scroll is shelved.<sup>47</sup>

*Sillyboi* helped librarians to know the contents of each scroll without unfolding it. Cicero sends his thanks to Atticus for his men having embellished his library by binding and attaching *sillybi* (*Atticus* 4.5.3, cf. also 4.4a.1; 4.8.2). Zenodotus as the first Director of the Alexandrian Library tried to equip as many scrolls as possible with *sillyboi*,<sup>48</sup> but it was impossible to put any simple title in some of them, because many scrolls contained more than one work, just like compilations of poetry.<sup>49</sup>

Besides, in order for the library to function well, it was not enough merely to attach *sillyboi* to scrolls. To make it easy to find any scroll in the library, Zenodotus decided to divide rooms, or parts of rooms, and assign them to the various categories he had decided on, first according to author classes (verse or prose, literary or scientific, what class in the class of literary, what class in the class of scientific etc.), and next, within each class, according to the alphabetical order of the authors'

<sup>44</sup> Düring (1966, p.607 with note 125); Blum (1991, p.52).

<sup>45</sup> The following summary of how the *Pinakes* of Callimachus came to be compiled as the final stage of classification development in the Alexandrian Library is of course hypothetical, but is a most likely reconstruction, based mainly on the studies by Blum (1991) and Casson (2001).

<sup>46</sup> Blum (1991, p.226).

<sup>47</sup> Blum (1991, p.93, note 275).

<sup>48</sup> Blum (1991, p.63).

<sup>49</sup> Casson (2001, p.37).

names, roughly by their first letter.<sup>50</sup> Before Zenodotus, the arrangement of scrolls in libraries, including Aristotle's, was conducted chronologically, but Zenodotus started the alphabetical arrangement, another contribution by him to the history of library arrangement.<sup>51</sup> After this classification, Zenodotus amounted tablets (πίνακες) on the shelves, to make it easy for librarians to find scrolls they wanted, giving them a survey view of the holding of the library. If they had gathered these tablets (tables), they could have obtained the list of all the scrolls in the library, so as to be able to know where to search, even without entering the library.<sup>52</sup>

This project of Zenodotus' was succeeded by Callimachus of Cyrene (ca. 310/05–240 BCE), who made a detailed bibliographical survey of all Greek writings, called the *Pinakes* (πίνακες, tables, tablets), or in full title '*Tables [Tablets] of Persons Eminent in Every Branch of Learning together with a List of Their Writings in 120 Books [Scrolls]*'.<sup>53</sup> Although the *Pinakes* has not survived, we can reasonably guess from references and quotations from it that Callimachus divided Greek writers into separate groups, by employing the concepts of tables/tablets (πίνακες), sub-tables, sub-sub-tables, and so on. He divided Greek authors first into (1) poetry and (2) prose; then (1) poetry into (1–1) dramatic, (1–2) epic, (1–3) lyric; (1–1) dramatic into (1–1–1) tragedy, (1–1–2) comedy, and so on. (2) Prose, on the other hand, was divided into (2–1) philosophy, (2–2) rhetoric, (2–3) history, (2–4) medicine, and so on, and even (2–5) a 'miscellaneous table' including cookbooks was prepared.

If we want to find information of Theaetetus, for example, and his works (if any), we go first to the table of (2) prose in the *Pinakes*, and find the names of prose writers divided into its sub-groups and alphabetically arranged by the first letter, to learn that we should go next to the table of (2–1) philosophy. Here too, the names of philosophers are divided into its sub-groups, and we find that we should search him among mathematicians. This kind of information is supposed to be contained in Book 1 of the *Pinakes*, probably accompanied by the information concerning what genre is dealt with in each of 120 books. We can thus immediately know which book to consult to find Theaetetus' brief biographical sketch, containing his father's name (Euphronius), birth-place (Sunium in Athens), and possibly his nickname,<sup>54</sup> and the list of his works alphabetically arranged by the first letter. If we want to get a particular work enrolled in the list, all we have to do is to follow the same journey of quest this time by physically walking in the library.

There is an interesting story concerning a book search in the Alexandrian Library (Vitruvius, *De Architectura* VII Praef. 5–7). Aristophanes of Byzantium (probably ca. 257–180 BCE) was an eminent successor of Eratosthenes (ca. 285–194 BCE) as Director of the Alexandrian Library. He daily engaged in reading through all the

<sup>50</sup> Because the scrolls on the shelves are constantly growing, any fuller alphabetization was rather to be avoided (cf. Blum (1991, p.191 and p.215, note 62, pp. 226–227); Casson (2001, p.37)).

<sup>51</sup> Blum (1991, p.226); Casson (2001, p.37).

<sup>52</sup> Blum (1991, pp. 226–227).

<sup>53</sup> *Suda* K227 (Καλλιμάχος); cf. Casson (2001, p.39).

<sup>54</sup> It is sometimes attached to distinguish the author from other writers with the same name (cf. Casson (2001, p.40)).

scrolls with the greatest enthusiasm and care. One day a competition of poets was held before the king, and he was chosen as one of the judges. But he disqualified all but one poet, who least pleased the audience, detecting plagiarism in the works of everyone else. When challenged, Aristophanes, trusting to his memory, brought out a vast number of scrolls from specific shelves, and by comparing them with what had been recited, made the pilferers make confession.<sup>55</sup> Aristophanes had internalized Callimachus' *Pinakes* in his mind.

For ordinary people, even if they had had Callimachus' *Pinakes* at hand, it would have been extremely difficult to reach the scroll they wanted to read because the Alexandrian library was so huge and full of scrolls. Besides, some *sillyboi* were without titles; the contents of some scrolls were different from what their *sillyboi* made people expect, due to their error or incompleteness. When Zenodotus had previously compiled his inventory relying on the *sillyboi*, he did not check the correctness of the data, partly because it was not important for his immediate purpose, and partly because he had no time to do so.<sup>56</sup>

This was why Callimachus and his aides checked once again the entire holdings of the library, and listed on a separate tablet or sheet of papyrus each author's information; titles of available copies; such information of each work as its beginning, number of scrolls and standard lines etc.<sup>57</sup>

## 5.7 The Aviary and Augury

In clear contrast to the book search in libraries, where mistakes can easily take place, the Aviary in the *Theaetetus* gives the impression that mistakes never happen. But this impression is itself a mistake. To see what is wrong, let me here ask a question. Why did Plato set an aviary in the soul, not an enclosure of land animals?

The difference between land animals and birds lies in the latter's possession of wings. Plato shows interest in bird-catching (*Sph.* 220b; *Lg.* 823e-824a). According to Aristophanes' *Birds* (526–529), birds are caught by means of such devices as snares, traps, limed twigs and nets of all sorts. It is impossible for fowlers to chase a bird to catch it. All they can do is to wait, relying on various kinds of traps and nets. It is pure illusion to think that the possession of birds in the aviary allows one the free command of them. Socrates says that the receptacle is empty, when we are children (*Pl. Tht.* 197e2–3). The empty receptacle may make us imagine a small cage, but even if it is small when we are infants, it eventually becomes enormously large, containing all kinds of birds (197d7–8). This huge size and the lack of wings on our part certainly make it impossible for us to chase a bird. We are destined to accept whatever happens to get caught in our net.

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Casson (2001, p.38).

<sup>56</sup> Blum (1991, pp. 226, 229–30).

<sup>57</sup> Blum (1991, p.230).

However, having a bird in hand is not the only way to know a bird, nor is it a proper way, even though our physical experience may make us suppose that without holding something in our hands so as to be able to look it over carefully we will not be able to know it, as is indicated by the expression ‘That’s up in the air’.<sup>58</sup> But as far as ornithological knowledge is concerned, the essence of birds (the item to be understood) is shown in their flight in the air, their little instantaneous movements, and their sequences at different angles.<sup>59</sup> Ancient Greece developed its own tradition of ornithological knowledge, based on the flight patterns and cries of birds, in the form of augury. According to the chorus of Aristophanes’ *Birds* 708–722:

All the greatest things come to mortals from us, the birds. First, we reveal the seasons of spring, ... When a crying crane migrates to Libya, it reveals that it is time to sow ... We are to you Ammon, Delphi, Dodona, Phoebus Apollo. For, it is after first going to birds that you turn to everything ... And you regard as a bird whatever about divination decides. ... Are we not clearly for you a prophetic Apollo?

Ammon, Delphi, Dodona, Phoebus Apollo, with whom the chorus of birds identifies themselves, all appear in the *Phaedrus* as gods in command of prophecy (244a-b, 265b, 275b-c). Augury is also referred to in the *Phaedrus* and compared with μαντική, which is the art of prophecy based on divine madness (244c). Another thing in common between Aristophanes’ *Birds* and the *Phaedrus* is the high value placed on the wings. When the chorus asks Pisthetaerus how men will consider winged creatures to be gods, not jackdaws, he replies that even Hermes, Nike, and Eros wear wings and fly (Aristophanes, *Birds* 571–575). As if encouraged by Pisthetaerus’ high evaluation, Socrates in the *Phaedrus* praises the power of the wings, which partake of the divine more than any other bodily thing, and enable the soul to travel through air and control all the universe, lifting it aloft to the region where the race of the gods dwells (246b7-d8, also cf. 248c, 249a, 251b-d, 252b-c, 255c-d, 256b, d-e).

There is also in Aristophanes’ *Birds* a caricatured criticism against writing (951–991). Against the Oracle-Monger, who makes up an oracle of Bacis and repeats ‘Take the scroll’ (974, 976, 980), Pisthetaerus also makes up an oracle of Apollo, and repeats ‘Take the scroll’ (986, 989), saying that he must apply a stout stick to the ribs of the impostor, without sparing him, even if the impostor were an eagle, the bird of Zeus. Plato is likely to have had the *Birds* in mind when writing the *Phaedrus*.

The birds in Aristophanes’ comedy are proud of their physical wings. However, for Plato it is important to grow spiritual wings. But how do they grow? Their nourishment is divine things, that is to say, beautiful, wise and good things (*Phdr.* 246d8-e2). Now, one of the divine things is madness, which Socrates regards as more beautiful than prudence, which is of human origin (244d3–5). Does this mean that the sprouting of wings is brought about by the madness of Eros (cf. 252b7–8)? However, it is risky to rely solely on madness or divine inspiration (244a-b), for while an attendant on Zeus, the guardian God of philosophy, is able to bear the

<sup>58</sup> UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING is an experiential basis of metaphors we live by (Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.20)).

<sup>59</sup> Gladwell (2005, p.44).



burden of Eros with greater constancy, worshippers of Ares, taken by Eros, may make a sacrifice of themselves as well as their beloved boys, if they are fired up by the slightest suspicion about the fidelity of the boys (252c). Thus, in order to nourish the spiritual wings in the truest sense, it is crucial to regulate madness by philosophic discourse (249a-b). In this sense, augury (οἰωνιστική), or οἰονοῖστική, which is identical with philosophy, as is revealed by its etymology as the art (-ική) of enabling human thought (οἰήσει) to possess understanding (νοῦν) and inquiry (ἱστορίαν) (244c7-8), is more important for us, even though μαντική (or μανική, the art of madness) may be more perfect and more honoured as something divinely given (244c2, 5, d2).<sup>60</sup>

Greek augury is the art that is practiced from the ground level, by observing the flight and cries of birds. This art was of great benefit to human life, though difficult to master (cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 826-828). In the *Meno* (100a5) Socrates quotes from Homer's *Odyssey* (X 495) and says that Tiresias alone had understanding. Tiresias' excellence in prophecy came partly from his expertise in augury. He says to his daughter, 'Keep safe for me in your maiden hand the auguries which I took, when I learned omens of birds at the holy seat where I seek divinations' (Euripides, *Phoenissae* 838-840). At Thebes in Boeotia he had a bird-observatory near the sanctuary of Ammon (Pausanias IX 16.1). From this observatory he observed the behaviour of birds. According to the *Scholia to Euripides' Phoenissae* (on line 839), 'those who foretell from the flight and cries of birds marked the signs of flights in tablets (ἐν δέλτοις), in order to guide through memory', and even though 'he [Tiresias] was blind ... his daughter, who had much experience, marked the signs of flights just taking place'. It was through this kind of inquiry helped by the writing tablets that Tiresias reached the supreme knowledge of augury.

What Tiresias noted, or made his daughter note, on the physical wax tablet is supposed to have been visual images as well as explanatory words, just as the tablets of geographers in Plutarch's *Theseus* 1 included geographical images as well as verbal explanations. As the result of the painstaking inquiry driven by the love of labour, and helped by the Illustrator and the Scribe in him, Tiresias came to internalize the systematic avian knowledge consisting of images and explanations.

Thanks to this knowledge, Tiresias makes no mistakes in his identification of flying birds in distance, while a novice easily makes mistakes. According to the successful case of explaining perceptual misjudgement in the Wax Block (*Tht.* 193b-194b), and its similar description in the *Philebus* (38c-d), mistakes take place, briefly speaking, in the connecting of perception with thought (ἐν τῇ συνάψει αἰσθήσεως πρὸς διάνοιαν, *Tht.* 195d1-2). Socrates compares this connecting to the

<sup>60</sup> Pace Rowe (2000), who says, 'Plato evidently does not think much of it [*oiōnistikē*], since despite its claims to rationality he still rates its products lower than those of *mantikē* ([244]d3 ...)' (p.172). The product of *mantikē* is certainly 'more perfect and more honoured' (*Phdr.* 244d2) than that of *oiōnistikē* because it is divinely given, but it is one thing for something to be perfect and honoured, and quite another for it to be of practical use to human beings for their spiritual development. To do and to know one's own and oneself, which helps one to become just and wise, belongs only to those who are sound of mind, not to those who are in the state of madness or divine inspiration (*Ti.* 72a5-6).



attempt to hit the target in archery (194a3–4): what corresponds to the target is what is seen or perceived (ὄψις, αἴσθησις, 193c3, 6, 8, d7, e1, 4, 194a1, 2, 6), and what corresponds to an arrow is an image impressed in the wax block of the soul, which Plato calls ‘sign’ (σημεῖον, 192a4, 193c3, 7, 194a2, 7, d4), ‘record’ (μνημεῖον, 192b6), ‘stamp’ (ἀποτύπωμα, 194b5), ‘imprint’ (τύπους, 194b6), and ‘impress’ (ἐκμάργεῖον, 194d6). What is important here is that the target is in distance, and the correct or erroneous matching takes place in the attempt to connect the target in distance with some image in mind.

The target in distance is the object of perception in the Wax Block. What is it then in the Aviary? This model is presented to explain conceptual mismatches, and there must be both the target in distance and some image in mind here too. Now, the target in distance in this model is each number or its knowledge, which is represented by a bird, but there is no explicit mention of images in mind, and this fact leaves no choice but to have a bird in hand and know it, or not to have it in hand, namely, not to have any idea about it (199d1–5). In contrast to this, Tiresias has so many detailed images and accounts of birds while novices have only imprecise and ambiguous images and accounts. The Aviary claims that a novice catches the knowledge of 11 instead of the knowledge of 12, when he mistakenly thinks 7 plus 5 is 11 (199b2–6), but what he actually has in hand is the image and the account of 11, which the Illustrator and the Scribe in him have created, and also those of 7 and 5. If Theaetetus, a young Tiresias in mathematics, happens to think about 11 as its answer, he will immediately notice that it is wrong, because in his mental tablet a proposition corresponding to Euclid IX 22 is written: ‘If as many odd numbers as we please be added together, and the multitude of them be even, the whole will be even’. This proposition applies to whatever large number it is (cf. 196b1–3). On the other hand, novices in mathematics, whose accounts of ‘odd’ and ‘even’, and such numbers as 5, 7, 11 and 12, don’t constitute a systematic whole, will easily miss their mistake.

The Aviary is mistaken in holding that (1) once we possess birds in the aviary, we can catch them whenever we like, (2) only the birds in the aviary are at our disposal, and (3) having a bird in hand is the surest way to know it. In fact, to have a bird in hand is the worst way to know the bird, for the tight grip will certainly rob it of its natural behaviours. If we want to know a bird, we have to release it and see how it flies in the sky among other birds, just as it is necessary to open a scroll and read it, if we want to know its contents. According to the *Theaetetus* 197d, some birds fly in a big group, some in a small group, and some solitary through all birds in any direction. Plato is supposed to be hinting at the importance of actual observation of different patterns of behaviour displayed by birds in flight. In the Alexandrian library too, all sorts of scrolls were shelved, some in flocks apart from the rest, others in small groups, and some solitary. Callimachus himself was a solitary bird, flying through all authors in whatever direction he goes, for he could belong to tables of prose, poetry and different genres.<sup>61</sup>

The Wax Block and the Aviary appear in Part 2 of the *Theaetetus*, where knowledge is defined as true judgement, not in Part 3, where λόγος is brought into focus.

<sup>61</sup> Casson (2001, p.40).

This fact corresponds to the fact that the Wax Block does not contain any written texts, and that the Aviary neglects the λόγος of birds in flight. This neglect in Part 2 has made it impossible to explain conceptual mistakes.

Part 3 of the *Theaetetus*, on the other hand, takes into account the role of λόγος as an essential factor for knowledge, by defining it as 'true judgement accompanied by λόγος'. It examines three senses of λόγος: (1) making one's own thought clear through voice by means of verbs and nouns (206d1–3, 208c5); (2) the enumeration of elements (206e7–207a1, 207b4–5, c3–4, 6–7, 208b4–5, c6); (3) the specification of difference by which each thing differs from everything else (208c7–8, d6–7). It also examines the theory called 'Socrates' Dream', which distinguishes knowable and unknowable things by the standard of whether they are expressible in λόγος or not, with the implicit assumption that λόγος consists in enumerating the elements of complex things (201d–202c). The main interest of Part 3 thus certainly lies in the enumeration of elements, even though it is rejected there in the final analysis. What is interesting about this enumeration is that after its rejection in the *Theaetetus* it appears again as an essential factor for knowledge in the *Politicus* (in the method of παράδειγμα (example), 277d1–278e12, 285c8–286b2) and in the *Philebus* (in γραμματική (art of letters), 16b5–18d2). To understand this development of Plato's, let us see now how Theuth found the elements of language by means of Collection and Division. Concerning this method Socrates said in the *Phaedrus* that if he finds a person skilled in this method, he will follow after him, 'straight behind, in his footsteps as if he were a god' (266b6–7). Thus the consideration of how Theuth employed Collection and Division to discover the elements will give us some hint on Plato's idea of knowledge as well.

## 5.8 Collection and Division

The explanation of Collection and Division in the *Phaedrus* is very formal (265c–266b).

Collection: To see together the things scattered in many places and bring them together into one form (μίαν ιδέαν), so as to be able to define and make clear each thing about which one wants to teach on each occasion. (265d3–5)

Division: To ... cut it according to its species and along its natural joints, and not to try to break any part, after the manner of a bad butcher. (265e1–3)

Its explanation in the *Philebus* (18b6–d2), on the other hand, is concrete, describing how Theuth invented γραμματική. It consists of two stages.

[Stage 1] When ... according to an Egyptian story, Theuth ... noticed that voice is unlimited, he was the first to notice that (1) the vowels in the unlimited variety are not one but several, and again that there are (2) others that do not partake of voice, but of some sound, and that they too have some number; and he

distinguished (3) a third kind of letters (γράμμάτων) which we now call voiceless (mutes). (18b6-c2)

[Stage 2] After this he divided (3) the soundless and voiceless ones down to each individual one, and he treated (1) the vowels and (2) the intermediates in the same way, until he, having grasped their number, gave to each and all of them the name ‘element’ (στοιχεῖον). And as he realized that none of us could learn any one of them alone by itself without learning them all, and considering that this bond is one and making all of them in a way one, he assigned to all of them a single art, and proclaimed it to be γράμματική, giving this name to it. (18c2-d2)

However, although this explanation is concrete, it is too succinct to be understood on its own. So let us supply its details.<sup>62</sup>

Theuth’s inquiry starts from noticing the unlimited character of voice (*Phlb.* 18b6). According to *OED*, ‘voice’ is ‘sound produced or uttered with vibration of the vocal cords’ (II.11), and thus it constitutes a continuous spectrum and is unlimited. But everything involves limit as well as unlimitedness. So we will be able to find in voice, too, one form (μία ιδέα) (16c9-d2). This part of inquiry is carried out by means of Collection, which enables one to see together the things scattered in many places and bring them together into one form (μίαν ιδέαν), according to *Phaedrus* (265d3–5). ‘One form’ Theuth found first in the unlimited variety of voice by Collection was ‘vowel’ (φωνήεν, literally ‘what is vocal’, cf. *Phlb.* 18b8).

But ‘vowel’ is also ‘a sound produced by the vibrations of the vocal cords’ (*OED* I a), and thus is unlimited. However, in its continuous spectrum there are several focal points: for example, if one keeps vibrating the vocal cords, starting from α toward ι, with the gradual increase of the elevation of the tongue, it produces η, ε, and ει on the way, and if one rounds the lips gradually, starting from α toward ου, it produces ω and ο, and if one starts from ι and moves to ου, it produces υ in between.<sup>63</sup> Theuth thus tried next to find exactly how many and what vowels can be set as the basic focal points of the Greek language (cf. 18a7-b3), and chose some simple combinations as heuristic devices. They are, for example, θε, αι, τη, and τος in θεαίτητος, and θε, ο, δω, and ρος in θεοδωρος. Of course, some of them contain items that are not vowels, but if one focuses on vowels, leaving aside other items for the moment, one arrives at 6 items: ε, α, ι, η, ο, ω. After that, if one continues the same procedure with other combinations, one will find one more item, υ. This part is covered by (1) of Stage 1.

After vowels Theuth turned to non-vowels, and through similar procedures obtained 17 items, which includes both (2) the intermediates and (3) voiceless. The total number of simple items he had found thus became 24, and the method he relied

<sup>62</sup> Such an attempt is made by Menn (1998, pp. 298–299). The method Socrates recommends and explains as the tool for discovery in *Phlb.* 16c-18d should be taken as the method of Collection and Division, as Benitez (1989, pp.45–47) shows by pointing out the use of the characteristic language of division and collection in the *Philebus*; cf. also Menn (1998, p. 292, note 1). Want of space makes it impossible here for me to enter into the detailed examination of Plato’s texts dealing with the method of Collection and Division.

<sup>63</sup> Smyth (1956, p.9 [7]).

on so far was Collection, the method for seeing together the things scattered in many places and bringing them together in one form. But what he has found remains in the realm of fleeting sounds, and this means that he needs written signs to identify his discoveries and facilitate their teaching. So each time he discovered one form of sound, he assigned to it a picture which represents the thing whose name starts with that sound. It was in this way that he came to possess the 24 letters (γράμματα, cf. 18c2): (1) Α, Ε, Η, Ι, Ο, Υ, Ω; (2) Ζ, Λ, Μ, Ν, Ξ, Ρ, Σ, Ψ; (3) Β, Γ, Δ, Κ, Π, Τ, Θ, Χ, Φ.

But the explanation at 18b6-d2 does not end here. At 18c3 Theuth's inquiry enters a new stage (Stage 2), which is the stage of inquiry by Division (cf. τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο διήρει, 18c3). This stage is necessary because the discovery of the exact number between the unlimited and the one is all important for the establishment of an art (ὁπόσα, 16d7; τὸν ἀριθμὸν ... πάντα ... τὸν μεταξύ τοῦ ἀπείρου τε καὶ τοῦ ἐνός, 16d8-e1). The story of Theuth's inquiry contains two references to number (18c1, 5), but their statuses are different, as is suggested by the difference of Stages, and also by the difference of definiteness: the number in Stage 1 is indefinite (πλείω, 18b9; ἀριθμὸν δέ τινα, 18c1-2), while the number in Stage 2 is definite as the number of the letters that constitute the language (ἀριθμὸν αὐτῶν, 18c5). There is a danger that the number discovered before the inquiry by Division may be the result of cutting after the manner of a bad butcher (cf. *Phdr.* 265e2-3).

So Theuth embarked on Division of the letters at 18c3, starting the inquiry of Stage 2. He had in front of himself the three kinds, (1) vowels (α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω), (2) intermediate sounds (ζ, λ, μ, ν, ξ, ρ, σ, ψ), and (3) voiceless sounds (β, γ, δ, κ, π, τ, θ, φ, χ).<sup>64</sup> He first dealt with (3) voiceless sounds (18c3-4). Now, there are two alternative ways of division: to divide them into labial (π, β, φ), palatal (κ, γ, χ), and dental (τ, δ, θ), or into smooth (κ, π, τ), middle (γ, β, δ), and rough (χ, φ, θ). But whichever division Theuth chose, his final conclusion was the same: for example, τ is classified as non-vowel, voiceless, dental and smooth. Next, he conducted Division of (1) the vowels and (2) the intermediates in the same way, and through this procedure he finally 'having grasped their number, gave to each and all of them the name 'element' (στοιχεῖον), ... and ... assigned to all of them a single art, and proclaimed it to be γραμματική, giving this name to it' (18c5-d2).

It is to be noted that although the word 'letter' has already appeared in Stage 1 of Theuth's story (γράμμάτων, 18c2), the word 'element' has not yet appeared. It is not until here at the end of Stage 2, when the proclamation of the establishment of γραμματική is made, that Socrates employs the word 'element' (στοιχεῖον, 18c6). Translators and interpreters tend to treat both words as if Plato had made no

<sup>64</sup>On this division of the elements other than the vowels, which grammarians in general adopted, cf. Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* I 102; Dionysius Thrax cp. 6 (pp. 11-12 (*Grammatici Graeci* I 1)); Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Compositione Verborum* 14.72-76, 120-124; Pl. *Tht.* 203b, and probably also Arist. *Po.* 1456b25-31. As to another way of division, probably that of Diogenes of Babylon, which includes θ, φ, χ in the intermediate group, cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* I 102; Diogenes Laertius VII 57.

distinction between them, translating them commonly as ‘letter’.<sup>65</sup> But it is one thing to possess basic items with their identification marks, and quite another to regard them as the constituting elements of an art. The latter requires the understanding of how the art is constituted through complex interrelations of the elements, which are connected together by some binding principle (cf. ‘bond’, δεσμὸν, 18c8). Collection allowed Theuth the possession of letters, but it was Division that enabled him to understand exactly how the things that are represented by them are related with one another, and in this way to discover the exact number between the one and the unlimited, leading to the establishment of the art of letters (γραμματική) as a systematic knowledge consisting of its elements.

## 5.9 Socrates’ Dream and the Communion of Forms

The establishment of γραμματική by Theuth gives us a clue to understand Socrates’ Dream in the *Theaetetus* (201c7–206b12). This theory claims that the element is perceivable, can be named, but is not expressible in λόγος because it is simple, and that only complex things, like syllables, are expressible in λόγος, which is enumeration (202b6–8). As an illustration Socrates asks Theaetetus whether the first syllable of ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ actually accepts the enumeration of its parts as its λόγος, and obtains Theaetetus’ positive reply with its λόγος as ‘*sigma* and *δ*’; then he tells him to say the λόγος of *sigma* in the same way, to which Theaetetus replies that it is impossible to enumerate the elements of an element, pointing out that *sigma* is one of the voiceless items, a mere sound like a hissing of the tongue (203a3–b4).

Theaetetus’ further comment, which is unnecessary as a step in the argument, that *bēta* is neither voice nor sound, and that even the seven clearest sounds (vowels) have only voice (203b4–7), together with the mention of the names to be taken to be Theuth’s invention (*sigma* and *bēta*), suggests that Plato is indicating that the explanations of ζ, β, and vowels given by Theaetetus are genuine λόγοι for grammarians, even though they are not acceptable as λόγοι for the Dream theorist, due to his narrow concept of λόγος, according to which no element accepts λόγος because it is one form without any parts (μία ιδέα, 204a1, 205c2, d5, e1, ἀμέρες 205e2), indivisible (ἀμέριστος, 205c2, d2), uncompounded (ἀσύνηθeton, 205c7), and simple in form (μονοειδές, 205d1). The only λόγος Socrates’ Dream admits is the enumeration of elements, and therefore elements are unknowable. However, the truth is that the knowledge of elements is much clearer and more decisive for the perfect grasp (λαβεῖν τελέως) of each subject of learning than that of the complex (206b7–9), which suggests that the mastery of γραμματική requires the ability to define each letter in the way that Theaetetus explained *sigma*.

<sup>65</sup> e.g. Fowler (1925, p.227); Ryle (1960, p.441); Taylor (1972, p.113); Frede (1993, p.11); Menn (1998, p.292). Gosling (1975, p.9) is exceptional in using ‘letter’ for γράμμα and ‘element’ for στοιχεῖον.

'Uncompounded' and 'simple in form' were terms Plato employed to characterize Forms (*Phd.* 78c3, 7, d5, 80b2, 83e3; *Smp.* 211b1, e4), which means that the logic of Socrates' Dream could jeopardize Plato's Forms, which must be knowable more than anything else. How is it possible to avoid this difficulty? The escape route had already been prepared in a casual remark in the *Republic*: 'Each Form is in itself one, but by virtue of its communion with actions and bodies and with one another it shows itself everywhere, each appearing as many' (*R.* 476a6–8; also cf. 531c10–d1).<sup>66</sup> Shorey's comment concerning this passage may be a little extreme, when he says that Plato in the *Republic* 'is "already" aware ... of the misapprehension disposed of in the *Sophist* 252ff. that the metaphysical isolation of the Ideas precludes their combination and intermingling in human thought and speech'.<sup>67</sup> But it is certain that Plato made the most of what the *Republic* indicated as the possibility of the communion among Forms, later when he wrote the *Sophist*, in which Collection and Division plays an important role as the guiding inquiry method.

## 5.10 Enumeration of Elements

The second sense of λόγος in the *Theaetetus*, the enumeration of elements, is rejected, because even if someone could enumerate θ, ε as the elements of the first syllable of Theaetetus' name, he would not be regarded as having knowledge of θε, if he mistakenly enumerated τ, ε as the elements of the first syllable of Theodorus' name (207e–208a). It is interesting that Aristotle also employed ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ in his explanation of the parts of diction (λέξις). He says, 'A noun is a voice [sound], compounded, significative, not indicative of time, no part of which is signifying by itself', and comments that ΔΩΡΟΝ in ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ is not signifying (*Po.* 1457a10–14). The latter comment is difficult to understand, and it is suggested to change ΔΩΡΟΝ into ΔΩΡΟΣ, following the similar case in *De interpretatione* (ΙΠΠΙΟΣ in ΚΑΛΛΙΠΠΙΟΣ, 16a21), but whatever it may be, it is certain that Aristotle is aware that ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ is composed of ΘΕΟΣ (god) and ΔΩΡΟΝ (gift). In contrast, the person who misspells Theodorus' name as ΤΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ, while correctly spelling Theaetetus' name as ΘΕΑΙΤΗΤΟΣ, is not aware that ΘΕΟΣ (god) is contained in both names. A teacher of γραμματική, on the other hand, knows that ΘΕΑΙΤΗΤΟΣ consists of ΘΕΟΣ and ΑΙΤΗΤΟΣ (asked for).<sup>68</sup> According to Aristotle, the parts of diction are element, syllable, conjunction, article, noun, verb, case, and λόγος (sentence or phrase) (*Po.* 1456b20–21). An expert of γραμματική knows how all the

<sup>66</sup> On this passage cf. e.g. Havelock (1963, p.225).

<sup>67</sup> Shorey (1937, p.517, note f).

<sup>68</sup> Although both Theodorus and Theaetetus were named so because they were god-sent children, ΘΕΑΙΤΗΤΟΣ, whose meaning is the same as Samuel, indicates explicitly that he was born, 'asked of God' (cf. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* V 345–346 (Niese)). Cf. also Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 384.

instances of these parts, which have their own elementary unity, are related to one another, constituting a multi-layered system.

When presenting the enumeration of elements as a possible sense of λόγος, Socrates referred to the enumeration of one hundred timbers of a wagon in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (456; *Tht.*207a3–4). His reference to this example is interesting, because Hesiod himself does not think that the mere ability to enumerate them makes anyone 'an expert of a wagon', for the expertise requires the ability to build a wagon with the one hundred timbers stored up at home (455–457), that is to say, the understanding of what each timber is, how it is structurally connected with other timbers, and what contribution it makes to the functioning of the whole, just as the mastery of γραμματική requires such understanding about the elements.<sup>69</sup> The ability to enumerate the one hundred timbers is merely at the level of a child who has just memorized all the letters.

## 5.11 Specification of Difference

The third sense of λόγος in the *Theaetetus*, the specification of difference by which each thing differs from everything else, is rejected, because it can be made even at the level of true opinion. Socrates points this out, employing as an example the λόγος of the sun as 'the brightest of the bodies that move round the earth in the heavens' (208d). People have this true opinion easily, because the sun is clearly visible in the sky. It is actually a best παράδειγμα (example) that helps us to learn about other heavenly bodies: according to the *Politicus*, παράδειγμα helps learning because it has as its elements clearly perceptible features which are shared inconspicuously by the noblest things accessible only by rational discourse (λόγος). For example (i.e. to cite a παράδειγμα from the learning of γραμματική), an easy word to learn is helpful as a παράδειγμα, because it contains in a conspicuous form the same elements (letters) that are hidden in difficult words (277d1–278e12, 285d9–286b1). But the object of learning γραμματική is not just to know the correct spelling of difficult words, but to become an expert grammarian. In the same way, the object of the search after the definition of the statesman, with the weaving as a παράδειγμα and by means of Collection and Division (279aff.), is not just to know the statesman's definition, but more ambitiously to become a good dialectician about all things (285c8–285d8).

If asked what the sun is, both a layman and an expert of cosmology will answer 'the brightest of the bodies that move round the earth in the heavens'. But in giving this answer the former is relying on the sun's perceptible brightness, while the latter is relying on his expert knowledge, which covers not only the sun, but also the moon and the five planets, and even the Same and the Different, which contribute to the movement of stars, as is explained in the *Timaeus* (36c–39e).

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Burnyeat (1990, pp. 199, 211–212).



## 5.12 Knowledge of Olympian Gods

Although Simonides is said to have been the discoverer of the mnemonic system of places (*loci*), it may be more appropriate to call him its systematiser and teacher,<sup>70</sup> for the technique seems to have already been employed by the bards of epic.<sup>71</sup> When the narrator of Homer's *Odyssey* describes the three circuits of movements (Odysseus' begging, the suitors' bow trial, and their death; *Odyssey* XVII 336–504, XXI 140–268, XXII 8–329), he is supposed to be helped by the seating arrangement of Odysseus' palace in his wax tablet of the mind, just as Simonides relied on the same kind of seating arrangement in his mind when recalling the seats of the deceased.<sup>72</sup>

The narrator of Homer's *Iliad* invokes Muses, the daughters of Memory on Mt. Olympus, before reciting the catalogue of ships (*Iliad* II 484–7). In this recitation of 266 lines (II 494–759), he is supposed to be relying upon his wax tablet of the mind, which contains the small scale scene of the area along the beach, where Greek soldiers stayed with their ships. As was pointed out above, the writing device of Greek gods was a tablet, but for them the world itself was the tablet on which they could both write, for example, Hector's fate (*Iliad* XXII 302–303), and read it, observing in one glance all the things from far above, and, if necessary, zooming in directly to the minute details of Achilles' chase of Hector (XXII 131–223).<sup>73</sup> It is impossible for us, human beings, to employ the world as our writing tablet, but it is possible to approach divine view through philosophical exploration. Plato did it on his wax tablet, physical and mental, by means of various methods, including that of Collection and Division, the gift to human beings from the gods (Pl. *Phlb.* 16c5–8).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Yates (1992, p.43).

<sup>71</sup> Clay (2011, p.115).

<sup>72</sup> Clay (2011, pp. 113–114).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. De Jong and Nünlist (2004, p. 70); Purves (2010, pp. 55–57); Clay (2011, pp. 3–6).

<sup>74</sup> I would like to thank G.R.F. Ferrari for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

## Modern Texts

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## Chapter 6

# Politics of the Soul in Plato's *Republic*



Iván de los Ríos

*Sit down in silence, my friend, and be persuaded by my story*

*Homer, Iliad IV, 412*

*It seems to me that all deception is a form of sorcery*

*R. III 413 c*

**Abstract** Although it serves as the ontological and axiological ground for Plato's political proposal, the tripartite soul theory will remain crippled if we ignore Plato's criticism of pre-Platonic cultural practices (especially of imitative poetry) and the influence of those cultural practices on the psychological configuration of individuals. With this aspect in mind, this paper has two main objectives: (i) to place Plato's psychology in the whole context of politics of the soul, with emphasis on the objective sense of this expression (i.e. politics *for* the soul); and (ii) to emphasize the connection between Plato's theory of the soul in the *Republic* and his criticism of imitative poetry in books II, III and X. I will try to show that artistic representation is both a psychological and a political experience: a psycho-political experience which involves metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and moral dimensions. What is the effect of imitative poetry on human soul? And to what extent does this effect compromise Plato's psycho-political project?

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## 6.1 Plato: de-Politicization of Politics?

I would like to begin with a question that, in my opinion, is crucial in Ancient philosophy in general and in Socratic-Platonic philosophy in particular. It is a simple question which, like every truly philosophical problem, remains valid and challenging over the centuries: what does ‘being a slave’ mean? What does it mean to be a slave, beyond the legal condition or δουλεία, in Ancient Greece and today? What is the connection between slavery, Plato’s psychology, imitative poetry and what I will call ‘politics of the soul’?

The title of this paper is broad enough to allow a reflection on virtually any aspect of Plato’s *Republic* (*R.*). In a sense, this is one of the ideas that I would like to defend here: that Plato’s *R.* is still a book of immense, if not infinite, significance, and that its cultural impact cannot be reduced to a single field of philosophical knowledge, isolated from all the rest. This global condition of Plato’s philosophy seems especially powerful when we try to explore the relationship between psychology and politics: not only in Plato’s ancient Athens but even today, the impact of political institutions and socio-cultural practices on the individual configuration, on one hand, and on the political repercussion of autonomous subjectivities, on the other, are unquestionable. It must be added to this that Plato’s psychology and political theory feed off of an extraordinarily rich philosophical background of ethics, education, psychology, epistemology, metaphysics, political theory, theology and even eschatology. Nevertheless, if we had to summarize in only one phrase such richness, I would point to the title of this paper: ‘politics of the soul’. In it we recognize one of Plato’s most famous and controversial gestures: the identification of city and soul, the isomorphism between the human dimension of the psyche and the public dimension of the polis.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the richness of this structural similarity, since ancient times (at least since Proclus; *In R.* VII, p. 210 K.) it has been suggested that this balance is precarious and only apparent, a false equilibrium which hides the subordination of the political dimension of the city to the psychological domain of the soul: Plato would be establishing the primacy of the psyche over the city in Western civilization; the primacy of the interior self over the community and, therefore, the priority of psychological justice over political justice. On this approach, the key to Plato’s political philosophy and its irreversible foundation cannot be other than psychology, and never *vice versa*, because it is precisely in the soul that we find the only true possible justice, since the city does not provide anything but ‘a sort of image of justice’ (εἰδωλόν τι τῆς δικαιοσύνης).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Laks has suggested that in *R.* there is an ‘ontological and axiological subordination’<sup>3</sup> of the outer city to the inner citadel, an ontological and axiological subordination of political and public justice to psychic justice: a man of intelligence ‘will keep his eye fixed on the

<sup>1</sup>*R.* IV 434 d ff. For the translation of *R.* I will use Reeve 2004.

<sup>2</sup>*R.* IV 443c4ff

<sup>3</sup>Laks 2007, p. 32. English translations of Laks 2007, Gómez Lobo 1993 and Vegetti 1998 are all mine.

constitution within him (πρὸς τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ πολιτείαν) and will try to preserve guard against disturbing anything there',<sup>4</sup> just as the young guardian will be a 'good guardian of himself' (φύλαξ αὐτοῦ).<sup>5</sup> According to this, there will be true justice when everyone devotes him or herself to his or her own duty, according to their function and nature, just as the shoemaker makes shoes and the carpenter makes furniture.<sup>6</sup>

Does this mean that we have to accept a one-sided priority of the soul over the city? Is it true that the progressive abolition of the distinction between soul and city and, also, the claim that the soul is a 'πολιτεία' leads to a radical de-politicization of Plato's proposal? According to Laks: 'Politicization of the soul paradoxically makes way for an entirely depoliticized practice of politics: if the soul is the real city, it is clear that the city, in the usual sense, becomes less important'.<sup>7</sup>

It is less important, indeed, but how much? For Plato, how insignificant is the external dimension of the polis from the perspective of a just and rightful soul? Doubtlessly, Plato was especially interested in the soul and in the political scenery the soul constitutes: a plural unity of parts in conflict related to each other in terms of governability; political relations of subduing, obedience, taming, censorship, etc. But, in my opinion, the priority of psychology and the politicization of the soul do not involve a radical de-politicization of Plato's proposal. Plato was probably not interested in the politics of his times, if we understand politics, in Gómez Lobo's words, as the 'multiple functionality of the polis i.e., active participation of citizens in issues related to the polis, the observance of military service, their presence in assembly, and procreation of children for the state'.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Socrates, who fought for Athens at least three times (*Apol.* 28 e), who had children and took part in the assembly in an active way (*Apol.* 32b, Xen., *Hellenica* I. 7. and *Memorabilia* I. 1. 38), Plato died childless, he never fought for his homeland and, at an early stage, withdrew from issues related to Athens to a private area where, instead of public action, he devoted himself to theoretical reflection, accompanied by philosophical elites. Plato's interests were indeed beyond concerns about daily events in Athens: he was more concerned with a conceptual elaboration of a pedagogical project which leads to the shaping of rightful, just and harmonious souls, inside a city equally rightful, fair and harmonious. However, Plato's estrangement, his literal separation from public order does not lessen the political dimension of his philosophy, if we understand it as what it is: the theoretical projection of a radical criticism on tradition and the attempt to establish the minimal bases for a reform of the conceptual, cultural and political paradigm. In a way Plato left behind city and politics

<sup>4</sup>R. IX 591 e1–2; cf. X 608b1

<sup>5</sup>R. III 413 e3–4.

<sup>6</sup>R. IV 443d–444a.

<sup>7</sup>Laks 2007, p. 265.

<sup>8</sup>'A citizen was, in general, a little landowner or artisan who performed military and political functions. The latter consisted in being a jury or taking part in the decisions of the assembly, the state highest authority. In Greece, democracy allowed and demanded to be multifunctional'. See Gómez Lobo, 1993, p. 338.

only to come back to them, to reform and design a new concept of city and politics. And he tried to do so, indeed, by suggesting a new conception of the soul. His proposal, then, is political or, at least, psycho-political, because it implies the awareness of the political conditions of any rational soul: the political conditions of any beautiful, just and harmonious human soul. Those conditions must be searched not only within the psyche but also in the cultural and pedagogical area of traditional practices within the Greek polis, in the cultural and political reality that shaped and educated Athenian souls. In this sense, 'It would thus appear that the *Republic* sets itself a problem which is not philosophical in the specialized sense of that term, but rather social and cultural'.<sup>9</sup>

What I would like to do here is to insist on the political dimension of Platonic philosophy and to place it in the core of the project presented in the *Republic*, together with his famous psychology of parts in conflict. In my opinion, the tripartite soul theory, in spite of its being the ontological and axiological ground for Plato's political proposal, will remain flawed unless we properly appreciate Plato's criticism of pre-Platonic cultural practices -especially of imitative poetry- and also, if we ignore the influence of those cultural practices on the psychological configuration of individuals. In other words, the theoretical foundation of the soul and its right functioning is only possible through the reformulation of the educational principles that regulate citizens' behavior since their childhood. In this sense, there is no complete and appropriate understanding of the soul without a political approach.

The soul needs politics to promote a perfect psychological development and to avoid moral corruption. That is the reason why any investigation of Plato's concept of the soul in the *R.* must take into account situational, contextual and educational elements which function in the shaping of the psychological unicity. In this sense, I think that one of the privileged places where we can see the articulation between politics and soul is the analysis of *mimesis* and imitative poetry in *R.* II, III, and X. What we find there is a deep examination of artistic education as a necessary and preliminary condition for the rightful configuration of the soul. That examination will allow us to clearly see the relationships between Plato's political psychology and what Grube and Klosko call 'education in the arts.'<sup>10</sup>

From this perspective, this paper has two objectives:

1. To place Plato's psychology within the context of politics of the soul, paying attention to the objective sense of this expression (i.e., politics *for* the soul)
2. To emphasize the connection between Plato's theory of the soul in *R.* and his criticism of imitative poetry. I will try to show that what artistic representation brings about is both a psychological and a political experience: a psycho-political experience which involves metaphysical, epistemological, psychological and moral dimensions. What is the effect of imitative poetry on the human soul? And to what extent does this effect compromise Plato's psycho-political project?

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<sup>9</sup>Havelock 1963, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Grube 1974, pp. 46–47, fn.12; Klosko 2006, pp. 124 ff.



### 6.1.1 *Politics of the Soul and Politics for the Soul*

In what sense should 'politics of the soul' be understood? What does Plato mean by calling politics the art *concerned with* the soul (*Grg.* 464b4 τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ ψυχῇ πολιτικὴν καλῶ)? The expression 'politics of the soul' can be understood in both the subjective and the objective senses of the genitive case, as we know it in languages like Greek, Latin or German.

- (i) In a subjective sense, politics of the soul are relationships of power which belong to the psyche and according to which its different parts are related to each other. These relationships are expressed as political in terms of governance, mandate, partnership, conflict, armed conflict, war, submission, censorship or violation, among others.

As we know, in different places of *R.*<sup>11</sup> Plato uses a warlike and governmental lexicon to express his psychology of parts in conflict, a tripartite theory of the soul in which we can distinguish three different species (*R.* IV 435e2), parts (IV 442b11;c5) or genres (IV 443d4). These parts are similar to the three types of nature we can find in the city and contribute to justice of the polis according to the principle of οἰκαιοπραγία (*R.* IV 433 c8; cf. II 370a4; IV 433a8; b4; d9). Making use of what, according to Boeri,<sup>12</sup> is an organicist conception which states that everything that exists in the macrocosmic level of the universe has a replica in the microcosmic level of individuals, Plato applies the political model of the investigation of the parts of the state to the field of the human inner self in order to highlight the structural analogy between social conflicts of the city and psychological conflict. This leads to the very well-known tripartite theory of the soul. I won't elaborate on that here. I just want to say that the psychological configuration of an independent individual is described by Plato in a purely political way and by means of a warlike lexicon. In this sense, soul justice is achievable through the establishment of government relations in the behavior of the rational agent, who struggles with himself to govern himself, thus highlighting, in the outer domain of actions, the warlike conflict from within (a civil war between reason and irrational appetites with alliance of the spirited element).<sup>13</sup>

- (ii) It is more important for my purpose to focus on the objective sense of 'politics of the soul'. In this sense, it represents the training and the organization tools which emanated from the state which are applied and have an important direct influence on the citizens' inner self. These educational tools are politics *for* the soul rather than politics *of* the soul, i.e., politics designed for education and the

<sup>11</sup> *R.* V 470 b5–470 d; VIII 550 e9–560a. Warlike terminology already appears in *Phd.* in line with the contrast between body and soul. Bodily appetites cause many wars (πόλεμοι), civil wars (στάσεις) and conflicts (μάχαι) (66 b8–c7).

<sup>12</sup> Boeri 2010, p. 292; cf. *R.* IV 436a.

<sup>13</sup> For warlike metaphors and lexicon related to the psychological conflict: *R.* IV 440e; 442 a–c, Classen 1959, Kühn 1994 and Blössner 1997.

care of the soul in order to influence the individual in his or her process of psychological configuration: an influence which can lead to a good government (victory of reason, with the help of θυμός, over irrational appetites) or to a bad government (subjugation of reason by irrational appetites). In this sense, we could say that politics of the soul are actually *cultural* politics of the soul.

In a way, the cultural politics of the soul precedes the psychological theory of parts in conflict. As Vegetti points out, inside Platonic philosophy “the psychic datum obviously precedes the political one, but the unitary re-composition of the divided self presumes the social and educative order of the polis”.<sup>14</sup> This means that the unitary re-composition of the divided self might result in promoting injustice, corruption or the dissolution of the human soul. This is precisely the possibility that Plato wants to evade by means of his philosophical project. And this evasion is only possible by means of an accurate identification of the sources of (political and psychological) corruption and by reformulating the new educational and cultural politics that will make it possible to shape a new class of citizens: citizens who are righteous, fair and free from slavery. According to Plato, the worst evil and the most horrible slavery is the one which makes us slaves of ourselves: free men should be more afraid of being slaves than of dying (δουλείαν θανάτου μᾶλλον πεφοβημένους,, *R.* 387b1–5). As it was said at the beginning, the question concerning cultural politics of the soul is not a technical question about the psychological elements and their attributes, or about its interaction program. It is a simpler and more impressive question: what does it mean to be a slave? Is not the state of being slave to one self—i.e., the subjection of our best part to the worst—the worst form of slavery? If the answer is affirmative, what is it that makes men slaves of themselves and what can we do to our autarchy or self-government?

This type of conflict cannot be solved only from inside the psychological theory of parts in conflict, in which slavery means, for instance, sovereignty of the ἐπιθυμητικόν. Beyond that, it is necessary to pay close attention to the educational order of the polis and to the external sources that contribute to an internal strengthening of the appetitive part. This task is achieved not by asking which part of the soul rules the psychological unit, but rather by investigating why the appetitive soul is predominant in a man who is a slave of himself. Doubtlessly, the psychological proposal in *R.* is one of the most important moments in Plato’s philosophical production, because, for the first time, it represents a sort of psychology of parts in conflict. However, I believe that, besides analyzing such an extraordinary conceptual operation, we need to ask ourselves about the strategic place and the exact sense of such a suggestion in the general project of *R.* In book IV the attributes and conditions of possibility of a fair and virtuous soul are outlined by describing a metaphoric warlike and political scenery. Then, it concludes that justice within the soul is equilibrium, the harmonious result of the victory of our best part, reason, over the union of our irrational appetites and our spirited part. But how is this possible? How does it work? By what means will the rational part, apparently inferior in size and

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Vegetti 1998, p. 30.

strength, be enabled to persuade the intermediate element and rule over the whole unit? The great importance that *paideia* has inside the Platonic project appears here as an educational strategy focused on the shaping of the soul: the production, breeding and taming of righteous individuals. Education for Plato is so important that, in book IV, and after having described some precepts which must be introduced to the guardians, Socrates states that any precept or law is insignificant compared to the real yardstick that allows individuals to act justly and righteously.<sup>15</sup> Any law will be useless if education and childhood training have atrophied a man's soul and, therefore, have made it impossible for him to make a moderate and correct use of reason. Indeed, the ultimate function of education is to shape souls and to produce in them a necessary order, since virtue (*ἀρετή*) in the soul, as in any other thing, depends on a regular and organized arrangement (*τεταγμένον καὶ κεκοσμημένον*, *Grg.* 506e). However, I am interested in emphasizing that the function of education is, to some extent, a negative one. Long before submitting the guardians and ruling class to a formation process in the name of reason, long before testing guardians for practicing higher studies and the philosophers in the study of arithmetic, geometry, stereometry, astronomy, harmony and dialectics, it is necessary to shape the soul of young people by taming and controlling their appetitive part, rather than by strengthening and feeding their rational one. Human nature, as Thucydides said (82.2, 6, 8.), tends toward excess, conflict and immediate satisfaction, the desire of possessing and imposing oneself upon others, the desire for honors. In a process of education, it is necessary to pay attention to these inclinations first. Because it is only by subduing them that it becomes possible to establish a psychological order and to use reason in a suitable way. This negative education that leads to censorship and taming of the appetitive part of the soul must be implanted starting in childhood as a way to supervise and regulate those stimuli which threaten to increase psychic, moral and political corruption. What are those stimuli? As Klosko writes, they are mostly the artistic ones:

Whereas Socrates, who views the soul as basically rational, sees education as an awakening of thought, Plato believes education to be concerned as much or more with the non-rational elements as with the rational. For Plato, early education, the only stage the majority of population experiences, concerns the soul before it is capable of reason.<sup>16</sup>

From this moment on, we can see more clearly to what extent subjective and objective senses of the expression 'politics of the soul' are inseparable. Laks is definitely right when he emphasizes the psychological nature of Platonic politics. However, we cannot overlook the fact that psychological interiority is an agonistic field where parts in conflict lead to different types of men depending mostly on the education and upbringing received. The individual—who is identified with his rational soul—is an animal circumstantially immersed in a cultural, social and political context. And this is a context of exposure and constant risk because the psychological interiority is inseparable from both its opening and integration to the external

<sup>15</sup> *R.* IV 423 e–424a.

<sup>16</sup> Klosko 2006, p. 124.

world. All these ideas presuppose an anthropological conception which identifies the human soul with an incredibly plastic and malleable object<sup>17</sup> which, depending on the educational tools, daily habits and external stimuli affecting an individual from childhood, can produce different types of individuals. As we can see in *Lg.* and *R.* II-III, the importance of education rests on the possibility of leading the soul of men in the right way from their childhood and of training it to look in the direction of true reality. Nevertheless, the plasticity of human nature involves the possibility of negative or modified construction of the psychic domain. Education is then crucial also in negative terms, because the order of practices, *Lg.* and habits can fatally affect the individual and the harmonious organization of his soul. A political and philosophical scheme to shape a healthy, fair and harmonious soul must pay careful attention to the context in which a particular individual grows. In this sense the outer order acquires a main role in platonic philosophy because it is in such an outer domain where the sources of the actual risk that can ruin the psychological harmony reside. Among the external stimuli endangering the balance of the soul which must be supervised by the state, we can find the so-called 'enemies of the rightful soul': internal and external instances which accompany and surround men since birth and which might lead them to a false and ignorant existence.

What are for Plato the archenemies of the righteous soul? And where do their power and infallibility lie? By 'enemy of the righteous soul' I understand any object or situation contributing to the dissolution and disorder of the psychological stability. In this sense all those regions of reality (physical, political or psychological) where a constant plurality and variability prevails over stability, unity and harmony, can turn into possible enemies of the soul. Among these enemies we can find: psychological irrational appetites (treated in *R.* IV and X), the epistemological domain of perception and opinion (*R.* V and VII) and the psycho-political order of *mimesis* (*R.* II, III and IX). All of these fields are connected to the realm of change and becoming.

In the next section I will focus on the case of imitative poetry as an enemy of the righteous soul. I will try to show that there is something identical that underlies the psycho-political levels of irrational appetites, perception, opinion and imitative art as a sort of connection. That underlying identity must be searched for to answer the following question: why does Plato consider irrational appetites, perception, opinion and imitative poetry as dangerous for the psycho-political unit of the self?

## 6.2 The Enemies of the Rightful Soul: The Case of Imitative Poetry

And wouldn't a soul that is most courageous and most knowledgeable be least disturbed or altered by any outside influence?

*R.* II 381a 1-5

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<sup>17</sup> Klosko 2006, pp. 124–125.

Psychological plasticity and the situational condition of man constitute essential requirements for the ideal foundation of the soul and the state. The soul reacts and constantly feeds on different types of external stimuli, which contribute to its growth and training. In this sense the state is responsible for establishing and supervising the necessary rules for a right influence on each citizen's educational process. Otherwise, the flexibility of human being will take on or integrate a vicious and corrupt impression.

We know that within his psycho-political proposal Plato considers education of guardians especially important, mainly in relation to gymnastics and music (*R.* II 376c ff; III 403-412b). We also know that the education of philosophers needs a sophisticated and long process of learning related to the greatest disciplines, as we can see in book VII. We know what our rulers and their assistants must know and learn if they are going to turn into what they can naturally become. However, as it was said in the last section, the educational process begins before young men can properly use their rational capacities and is mainly concerned with the non-rational elements of the soul. Education does not begin with a direct treatment of rational elements of the soul but with a treatment of the irrational ones. In this sense the soul is still a political object. However, from this early educational perspective, what is prior as the target of politics is the irrational part of the soul: this must be directed and ruled from the very beginning of the educational process in order to keep under control its inclinations and to prepare an ideal space for reason, beauty, truth and justice. For that purpose Plato establishes (from Book II on) the necessity of supervising myths and narrations, which were the educational bases of ancient Greek teaching. They play an essential role in the life of individuals since their very childhood, as we can see in *R.* II 377b-c:

SOCRATES: Now, you know, don't you, that the beginning of any job is the most important part, especially when we are dealing with anything young and tender? For that is when it is especially malleable and best takes on whatever pattern one wishes to impress on it.  
ADEIMANTUS: Precisely so. SOCRATES: Shall we carelessly allow our children to hear any old stories made up by just anyone, then, and to take beliefs into their souls that are, for the most part, the opposite of the ones we think they should hold when they are grown up?  
ADEIMANTUS: We certainly won't allow that at all.

If the main objective is the ordering of the irrational elements of the soul at an early stage, we need to find out which factors, along with nature, obstruct their domestication; which impediments make it difficult to regulate them. In other words, we will have to find out which areas of external reality and which contextual and educational factors make the irrational parts of the soul stronger, making it difficult for reason to tame them. Once we find out these factors, it is necessary to modify or eradicate them from any cultural training process, in order to avoid the corruption of the soul in the city. According to Plato, the domain of the arts, in a very broad sense,<sup>18</sup> is one of the most powerful, influential and dangerous areas among these external instances. The criticism of imitative poetry in Plato occasions

<sup>18</sup> I use the term 'art' in a broad sense in order to include all the artistic representations examined in *R.*: epic genre, dithyramb, tragedy and also painting, which has an important place in book X.

a very detailed description of the psychological mechanisms involved in any artistic experience, in particular the way in which it is received by spectators. In fact, *mimesis* is not only an artistic composition or its varied ways of diction (simple, imitative and mixed narration, according to III 392 b ff.), but also the act of representing itself: the act by means of which an actor impersonates (imitates) a different person in voice and aspect (*R.* 393 c-d).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, *mimesis* is a basic mechanism of knowledge in young people belonging to an oral society: children learn by repeating, imitating, reproducing, copying and simulating.<sup>20</sup> What children imitate is, in general, actions of those closest to them but also actions of characters related to tradition: children ‘learn by heart the poems of good poets, in which there are many . . . praises and encomia of the good men of old, so that the child is eager to imitate them and desires to become like them’ (*Prt.* 325e–326a). In this sense, all that children hear marks their souls and the souls want to perpetuate themselves by means of repetition and imitation:

Or haven’t you noticed that imitations, if they are practiced much past youth, get established in the habits and nature of body, tones of voice, and mind? (...εἰς ἔθη τε καὶ φύσιν καθίστανται καὶ κατὰ σῶμα καὶ φωνᾶς καὶ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν, *R.* III 395d).

For that reason, it is necessary to supervise not only poets and myth creators but also mothers and nurses who tell stories: ‘So our first task, it seems, is to supervise the storytellers: if they make up a good story, we must accept it; if not, we must reject it. We will persuade nurses and mothers to tell the acceptable ones to their children, and to spend far more time shaping their souls (πλάττειν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν) with these stories than they do shaping their bodies by handling them’ (*R.* 377c1–4).

The impact of artistic education is extraordinary. In an almost paranoid way Plato believes that it is necessary to control the stories, myths and fables that young people hear since childhood<sup>21</sup> (in this sense, he is interested in *mimesis* as an educational device and as a shaping the psychological mechanism of subjectivity and culture).

Why is the influence of art so powerful and where can we find its infallibility? What makes art an enemy of the city and soul? Why is poetry strong even to the point that anyone who contemplates it should be cautious if he is concerned about the constitution within himself (*R.* X 608b). As we know, when rejecting both the

<sup>19</sup> ‘...there is no twofold or manifold man among us (διπλοῦς ἀνὴρ παρ’ ἡμῖν οὐδὲ πολλαπλοῦς)’ (*R.* 397e).

<sup>20</sup> For these aspects, Havelock 1963, especially part I.

<sup>21</sup> As Klosko suggests, ‘Plato views the mind as an active probing force, which responds constantly to its environment and is attracted especially to aesthetic creations. Plato is somewhat unusual among political philosophers in the extent to which he believes artistic products affect the soul. Probably no other important political philosopher had as much respect for art, while the political implications are apparent: if art is so powerful, it must be carefully controlled. It is not surprising to see a large portion of the *Republic* –and a smaller though still significant percentage of the *Lg.* – given over to regulating the arts’ (Klosko 2006, p. 125).

imitative poet and the painter in book X, Plato states that it is fair to attack and to look down at the former as a correlate of the latter,

for he is like the latter in producing things that are inferior as regards truth, and is also similar to him in associating with the other element in souls, not with the best one. So, we would also at last be justified in not admitting him into a city that is to be well governed. You see, he arouses and nourishes this element in the soul and, by making it strong, destroys the rational one—just as someone in a city who makes wicked people strong, by handing the city over to them, ruins the better ones. Similarly, we will say an imitative poet produces a bad constitution in the soul of each individual by making images that are very far removed from the truth and by gratifying the element in it that lacks understanding and cannot distinguish bigger from smaller, but believes the same things to be now large, now small (*R. X* 605a5–c3).

This passage is of paramount importance as a clue to understanding our thesis of the underlying identity of the so-called enemies of a righteous soul: irrational appetites, perception, opinion and *mimesis*. We agreed that, according to Plato, all those enemies are sources of corruption, expressed in different ways. With some differences, they can be described in terms of i) ontological, ii) psychological, iii) epistemological, iv) moral and v) political degradation or precariousness. i) Ontological: because they inhabit and operate in a realm far removed from the truth; ii) psychological: because they are concerned with the inferior parts of the soul; iii) epistemological: because they lead to and strengthen error and confusion in knowledge; iv) moral: because they contribute to the corruption of the soul; and v) political: because they promote the corruption of the city. The inferior part of the soul is pleased in the order of 'sensitivity', by satisfying its own basic desires such as hunger, thirst, sexual impulses and others. Perception remains attached to the inferior order of being where, according to the analogy of the divided line, different material objects and their shadows rule. To this inferior domain also correspond imperfect and insufficient cognitive approaches, like perception and false opinion, which are full of confusion and contradictions. According to the previous quotation, poetry participates in all these corruptive factors and, besides, contributes to the moral corruption of the city and soul. But how? First, art is the focal point of corruption in an ontological sense, because it produces 'inferior things in relation to truth'. The field of artistic action belongs to the lower status in the hierarchal and axiological distribution of the different levels of being: in painting as much as in performing, the represented object is far from the true Form. The painter depicts a physical object, a bed for instance, and this is, at the same time, a lower representation or copy of an ideal model (*R. X* 596e ff.). In the case of imitation, not only particular objects but also actions are performed by professional people pretending to be (impersonating) different persons (*R. III* 393 c–d). *Mutatis mutandis*,<sup>22</sup> in both cases the same scheme operates: remoteness and distance of all copies—and copies of the copies—from the primordial model.

Secondly, art is a source of corruption in an epistemological way, because it leads the spectator to error. It shows him/her mere images, incomplete perspectives—in

<sup>22</sup> For the difficulties of relating pictorial art and imitative art in *R. X*, see Moss 2007 and 2008.



the case of painting—and makes the spectator confuse them with the represented object, as in the pictures of Zeuxis. In this particular sense, pictorial art deceives those who are not able to distinguish real knowledge from stupidity, science from ignorance and falsity, or, as we read in *R.* X 598 b-e, between ‘knowledge, lack of knowledge and imitation’ (ἐπιστήμην καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνην καὶ μίμησιν).

The same happens in the case of imitative poetry: we see men taking the identity of other men, gods or heroes, in a ‘sensorial dynamics’ which confuses our intellect and over-stimulates our imagination and affections in an excessive way. Poets, similar to painters, recreate images: in this case, movable images of excellence and human vice through the performance of individual actions. Similar to painters, poets, part of the Homeric inheritance, are far removed from the truth:

SOCRATES: Are we to conclude, then, that all poets, beginning with Homer, imitate images of virtue and of all the other things they write about, and have no grasp of the truth? Although, as we were saying just now, a painter will make what seems to be a shoemaker to those who know as little about shoemaking as he does himself, but who look at things in terms of their colors and shapes (*R.* X 600e5-601a3).

I am especially interested in the bond between pictorial and imitative performance, on the one side, and falsehood and error, on the other. The imitator uses human ignorance to propagate his art among those who are unable to distinguish truth from appearance and knowledge from ignorance. And those who are unable to perceive this distinction believe in artists as authentic experts in the art they perform or depict, making them their guides in practical life. However, an imitator ‘has neither knowledge nor correct belief about whether the things he makes are good or bad’ nor does he know ‘that imitation is a kind of game, not something to be taken seriously’ (*R.* X 602b-c). In spite of this ludic condition emphasized by Plato, the truth is that most human beings are tempted by artistic expressions, yielding completely to their influence, immersing themselves in error and interior imbalance. Facing this certain power, Plato wonders on which of the elements in a human being it has its effect (πρὸς δὲ δὴ ποῖόν τι ἐστὶν τῶν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχον τὴν δύναμιν ἣν ἔχει, X 602c-d), and decides that it is on an inferior part of the soul with no relation to the truth. In this crucial context, Plato establishes again a new division of the soul,<sup>23</sup> based on cognitive disharmony and optical illusions: we usually perceive contradictory sensorial perceptions which force us to see the same things, for

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<sup>23</sup> This is not the place to treat a topic which is nonetheless very interesting: to what extent is the threefold soul doctrine explicated in book IV coherent with the arguments found in book X? In the latter Plato uses two arguments to show that the soul is divided into two areas: rationality and irrationality. In the first argument (602 c-603 a) he offers the example of optical illusions to distinguish between the soul part which calculates, measures and weighs and the other part which assumes appearances with no criticism. In the second case, the perceptive conflict is replaced by an emotional one: when we face concrete and intense situations, we feel opposite inclinations. One part of our soul leads to an excessive expression of our passions, and the other tends to restrain, contain and moderate such expressions. I take this to be an interesting discussion, which Moss presents 2008 in a convincing way.

instance, as curved and straight.<sup>24</sup> When this happens, the part of our soul which counts, calculates and weighs helps to keep us far from deception and contradictory appearances, as written in 603a ff.<sup>25</sup> Despite this reasoned function of the soul, the same things appear as contrary at the same time. However, we already know that it is impossible for the same part of the soul to give opposite opinions about the same thing. Therefore, the part which gives opinions apart from measurement and the one which gives opinion according to measurement are bound to be different:

SOCRATES: But the one that puts its trust in measurement and calculation would be the best element in the soul. GLAUCON: Of course. SOC.: So the one that opposes it would be one of the inferior parts in us. GLA.: Necessarily. SOC.: That, then, was what I wanted to get agreement about when I said that painting—and imitation as a whole—are far from the truth when they produce their work; and moreover that imitation really consorts with an element in us that is far from wisdom, and that nothing healthy or true can come from their relationship or friendship. GLAU.: That's absolutely right. SOCR.: So, imitation is an inferior thing that consorts with another inferior thing to produce inferior offspring (*R. X 603 a-c*).

Plato emphasizes that this is valid for both painting and imitative poetry. In fact, in the case of imitations of men who act voluntarily or are forced and, as a consequence, believe they are happy or miserable, the risk of internal split remains exactly the same. In both cases, it all depends upon whether man stays in agreement with himself (ὁμοιοητικῶς ἑνθροπος) or whether he is, 'as in the case of visible representation, where he was split into factions and had opposite beliefs in him about the same things at the same time', also split into factions and at war with himself in matters of action (οὕτω καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσι στασιάζει τε καὶ μάχεται αὐτὸς αὐτῷ, *R. X 603d*). As Moss underlines, here the argument based on optical illusions slides abruptly to another one based on emotional conflict.<sup>26</sup> As we experience optical illusions, we usually experience an emotional internal conflict which leads us in opposite directions about the same thing. When we face the death of a child,<sup>27</sup> for instance, or when we suffer a tragedy, a part of us wants to bitterly mourn, cry and shout, delighting in its own grief, while other part tends to control this emotional outburst provoked by the event:

SOCRATES: And isn't it reason and law that tell him to resist, while what urges him to give in to the pains is the feeling itself? GLAUCON: True. SOC.: And when there are opposite impulses in a human being in relation to the same thing at the same time, we say that there must be two elements in him. GLAU.: Of course. SOC.: Isn't one part ready to be persuaded to follow the law, wherever the law leads? (*R. X 604 b-c*)

<sup>24</sup> 'And the same things appear bent and straight when seen in water or out of it, or concave and convex because sight is misled by colors; and every other similar sort of confusion is clearly present in our soul' (*R. X 602c-603a*).

<sup>25</sup> 'And haven't measuring, counting, and weighing proved to be most welcome assistants in these cases, ensuring that what appears bigger or smaller or more numerous or heavier does not rule within us, but rather what has calculated or measured or even weighed?' (*R. X 603a ff*).

<sup>26</sup> Moss 2008, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Plato states that the death of a child belongs to what he calls 'seeming evils' (613a, τῶν δοκοῦντων κακῶν).

The law of reason restrains the outbursts of the passions and leads the individual towards serenity in misfortune. The superior part of us is that which is ready to obey this reasoning, while the inferior part ‘leads us to recollections of our suffering and to lamentations, and is insatiable for these things’ (*R.* 604d-e). The ‘irrational and lazy part (ἄλόγιστον ... καὶ ἄργόν) is a friend of cowardice’ (δειλίας φίλον, *R.* 604d9–10). That is exactly the part that poets imitate most, for it is more difficult to impersonate a wise man’s character. So difficult, in fact, that poets sing the actions of men without merit rather than those of noble men, because they don’t look for the truth, but for the audience’s applause. And the audience of the theatrical performance act ‘as if their ears were under contract’ and ‘run around to all the Dionysiac festivals, whether in cities or villages, and never miss one’. The masses allow themselves to be pulled by the efficiency of imitation because the imitative poet ‘does not naturally relate to this best element in the soul, and his wisdom is not directed to pleasing it—not if he is going to attain a good reputation with the masses—but rather to the irritable and complex character (ἀγανακτικόν τε καὶ ποικίλον ἦθος), because it is easy to imitate (εὐμίμητον, *R.* 605a5–6)’. In short, it is fair to banish both the painter and the imitative poet because they work with the lower part of the soul, making the psychological appetite so powerful as to lead to confusion and the collapse of soul, to and instill in the individual psyche the habit of performing unpredictable actions, like the ones we see in Homeric heroes.<sup>28</sup>

We can see now more clearly that poetry is not only a source of ontological and epistemological corruption. It is also a source of moral and psycho-political degradation. As we realize in the quoted texts, art colludes not only with a lower region of being (images, shadows, objects) and of cognition (perception, opinion), but also has an influence on the lower part of the soul, nourishing and making this part more powerful instead of subduing it. In this sense, the relation between psychology and poetry is also a political relation. We could even talk of ‘politics of art’ in the subjective sense seen in section 2: as Plato states, imitative poetry—essential to Homeric tradition—establishes government relations with and within the psyche, making it unstable and imposing on it ways of internal organization resulting in the subduing of reason to irrational appetites: ‘an imitative poet produces a bad constitution (κακὴ πολιτεία) in the soul of each individual by making images (εἰδῶλα εἰδωλοποιοῦντα) that are very far removed from the truth and by gratifying the element in it that lacks understanding and cannot distinguish bigger from smaller, but believes the same things to be now large, now small’.<sup>29</sup> Exactly like the painter, he produces things that are far removed from the truth, and ‘associating (ὁμιλεῖν) with the other element in souls, not with the best one (...) he arouses and nourishes this element in the soul and, by making it strong, destroys the rational one—just as someone in a city who makes wicked people strong, by handing the city over to them, ruins the better ones’.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Achilles is presented as an example of contradictory and excessive behavior when expressing affection (*R.* III 388a-c).

<sup>29</sup> *R.* X 605b7-c4.

<sup>30</sup> *R.* X 605a9 ff.

Once again, the analogy is clear, but there is an important point we haven't explored yet: the question about the political methods of art. This question appeals to both the artistic experience and to the way it is received by an individual. An experience, as was seen before, we can label not only as an aesthetic experience, but also as a psychological, moral and political one. How does mimetic performance affect the human soul, and where does its devastating power lie? I would like to answer this question with Nietzsche's words. Just like Plato, Nietzsche considers that the power of any audiovisual performance accompanied by melody, rhythm and harmony resides in its invitation to yield. And that invitation can be easily turned into a political instrument, as we can understand if we approach the origin of poetry from a genealogical perspective:

*'On the origin of poetry.* - The lovers of what is fantastic in humans, who also advocate the view that morality is instinctive, reason as follows: 'Supposing that usefulness has always been venerated as the supreme deity, then where in all the world does poetry come from? This act of making speech rhythm counteracts rather than contributes to the clarity of communication, and yet it has shot up and is still shooting up all over the earth like a mockery of all useful expediency! The wildly beautiful irrationality of poetry refutes you, you utilitarians! Precisely to want *to get away* from usefulness for once - that is what has elevated humanity; that is what has inspired it to morality and art!' Now, in this case I must side with the utilitarians for once - after all, they are so seldom right, it is pitiful!<sup>31</sup>

According to Nietzsche, imitative poetry is far from a pure, spontaneous and altruistic expression of an artistic genius or the expression of natural desires of beauty in man. If we look at the proper functioning of an audiovisual performance, articulated around an internal rhythm and musical elements, we will see that, far from being an innocent creation, imitative poetry has a clear function. Without taking into account what it is being used for (to honor a god, to bribe a god, to calm the men's wrath or to entertain the people), art contains an extraordinary pragmatic dimension. This dimension is that of affective efficiency, and therefore, of political efficiency. In fact, imitative poetry can be used for taming, subduing and bewitching, or rather, for taming and subduing by means of a spell. These terms are clearly political: they suggest that an audience is helpless when facing the hypnotic mechanism of performance, because that mechanism is oriented to the irrational part of the soul and aims to stimulate and satisfy this part, allowing it to overflow in a natural way:

In those ancient times that called poetry into being, one really did aim at utility, and a very great utility at that; back then, when one let rhythm penetrate speech - that rhythmic force that reorganizes all the atoms of a sentence, bids one to select one's words and gives thoughts a new color and makes them darker, stranger, more distant: a *superstitious utility*, of course! Rhythm was supposed to make a human request impress the gods more deeply after it was noticed that humans remember a verse better than ordinary speech ... Above all, one wanted to take advantage of that elemental overpowering force that humans experience in themselves when listening to music: rhythm is a compulsion; it engenders an unconquerable desire to yield, to join in (*der Rhythmus ist ein Zwang; er erzeugt eine unüberwindliche Lust, nachzugeben, mit einzustimmen*); not only the stride of the feet but also the soul itself

<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche 2001, pp. 83–4.

gives in to the beat—probably also, one inferred, the souls of the gods! By means of rhythm one thus tried to *compel* them and to exercise a power over them: one cast poetry around them like a magical snare... Etymologically, *melos* means a tranquilizer, not because it is itself tranquil, but because its effect makes one tranquil.<sup>32</sup>

Nietzsche focuses here on the way in which musical art addresses a god as addressee. Men are the ones who want to subdue and calm the gods' fierceness—and ferocity of the soul (*ferocia animi*)—in order to achieve their goals. That is why they sing and perform something and in this way they can take control of Gods, turning them into slaves, suspending their judgment. Certainly, Plato does not speak about gods, but his argument is the same: imitative poetry is a control device and tends to tame the audience, whether this audience is a divine or a human one. The audiences are tamed by means of a perfect psychological identification with what they perceive and, as a consequence, the individual is no longer able to keep a critical distance from the experienced performance: he is pulled by it, dragged by it. He is dissolved in it. In the middle of this situation, any individual loses his identity—i.e., his rationality, his ability to calculate, measure and weigh something by means of a critical distance—and takes part in an affective flow which goes through the scenery. An actor impersonates a character. At the same time, the spectator turns into the character and also into the actor. He reflects in his inner self this affective domain coming from the outer world. And he perpetuates that domain in his own nature as an indelible habit. Man turns into a tale, a brief moment of tradition or mythology, an expression of an unquestioned and unquestionable cultural heritage: *de te fabula narratur*, as Horace would say (*Sat.* 1.1.69).<sup>33</sup> In fact, Plato identifies the imitative poetry with a form of bewitchment or poison which destroys the virtue of the soul: its effect is a ruin of the mind, a downfall of the spirit (*R.* X 595b5–6), an illness which will be lethal to those who listen to it without an antidote (φάρμακον). This passage shows to what extent the reflection on the types of *mimesis* or imitative poetry is inseparable from the psycho-political context of education: kids learn through repetition. Learning is repetition. And young Athenians are raised precisely in this way. Since childhood, they repeat and impersonate those mimetic representations which, in pre-Platonic Greece, operated as vehicles of culture: conveyance of written and non-written norms, moral codes, vices and virtues, public and private Lg., levels of technical development, etc. *Mimesis*, in the sense of both artistic representation and learning by repetition, is harmful and injurious without supervision, because it suspends critical judgment and invites us, indeed, to join in and to identify ourselves with the object or action represented.<sup>34</sup> Rhythm is a political act of serene imposition and *mimesis*, just as perception, sensation or tradition, invites us to yield and lose our own self in a plural flow alien to calculation, moderation and measure. Such being the power which both Nietzsche and Plato saw in art (cf. *Ion*), it is understandable that Plato wanted to maintain the young far from its pernicious influence.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 84–5.

<sup>33</sup> *R.* X 606a–e.

<sup>34</sup> Havelock 1963, p. 40.

To finish this section, we could say that imitative poetry is an enemy of the rightful soul because it contributes to its imbalance and benefits the reign of the irrational appetite over the intellect. How does it do it? By leading its actions in line with the inferior part of the soul—always craving for tears, laughter and groan—which tends toward the satisfaction of hunger, thirst, sex and similar pleasures. Traditional art represents before the audience gods, heroes and men continuously influenced by their lowest passions and instincts, letting them rule themselves and giving themselves to excessive manifestations of their feelings. Since the audience also tends to impersonate the poet's and the actor's *mimesis*, the individual sees his natural tendency to excessive affectivity strengthened and nourished. The artistic format itself tends to literally let loose the passions of man and to subject his psychic integrity to the irrational appetite. But not only the format, but also the style and artistic manner ruin the soul. Also the representational contents contribute to the dispersion of the intellect, because the artist limits him or herself to represent varied and multiple particular actions, full of little differences: never complete, always unstable, never truthful. A confusing and intermediate domain of reality imposed on men like a dream. All in all, the enemies of the righteous soul share a power to disperse the city and soul which comes from their alliance with those elements which characterize the opposite pole of science, wisdom, truth and good: variability, mutation, plurality, illusion and an enormous sensitivity to that which could affect us. Indeed, the most vigorous soul is that which, through a correct education from childhood, resembles as far as possible the serenity and impassivity of divine entities, since the wiser the soul is, the less disturbed or modified it could be by any external factor: 'And wouldn't a soul that is most courageous and most knowledgeable (ἀνδρειοτάτην καὶ φρονιμωτάτην) be least disturbed or altered (ταράσσειν τε καὶ ἀλλοιώσειν) by any outside influence?'<sup>35</sup> That condition is acquired through educational habit, which begins with the supervision of the artistic experience of the polis and extends towards the learning of those disciplines which strengthen the rational part of the soul.

### 6.3 Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to deal again with two questions that have gradually appeared throughout this paper. The first is this: what does it mean to be a slave? In an objective sense, politics of the soul helps us to understand and answer this question. In my opinion, that answer must be directed to the clarification of the relationships, in Plato's *R.*, between the tripartite doctrine of the soul, the political doctrine of the threefold composition of the city and the radical critique of art in all its expressions, as a mechanism of creation, education and psychological subjection. These relationships can be expressed more clearly by what I will call 'political truth' and 'practical truth'. Plato's question is an enquiry on truth at the level of

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<sup>35</sup> *R.* II 381a 3–4.

human affairs, both public and private: what is a true life? What does a true life consist in? What is the truth of the individual and the polis? It seems to me that, for Plato, a true life is a life free from every kind of slavery in relation to that which is more important to us and which we love of ourselves. The focus of slavery does not lie, then, in a legal aspect, but in a psychological one. The individual identifies himself with the best part of himself, his rational soul. Slavery of the soul is, then, the defeat of the rational part. But that slavery consists also in holding in our inner self an indelible lie not expressed through words: 'it is truly speaking a lie (ἀληθῶς ψεῦδος)—the ignorance in the soul of the one to whom the lie was told (ἡ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἄγνοια ἢ τοῦ ἐψευσμένου). For a lie in words is a sort of imitation (μίμημα) of this affection in the soul, an image of it that comes into being after it, and not an altogether pure lie. Isn't that so?' (R. II 382 b8-c1).

The lie without words of the soul is identified with the character of man: an irreversible stamp derived from an excessive influence of external and unregulated stimuli which produces damaging changes in our inner self. Imitative poetry (in its traditional version) infringes upon the possibility of excellence and psychic justice, because it feeds the inferior part of the soul, producing individuals excessively malleable by the influence of exterior, particular and immediate things and situations. In fact, art is the origin of a corrupt soul because what it reproduces and implants into the individual psyche is the precarious order of *becoming* in its eternal mutability: shadows and images, contradictory actions of unstable individuals, joy, sadness, laughter and lament. The lie of the soul—slavery—is the uncritical reproduction within the psyche of the immediate reality and, therefore, is an infinite estrangement from Truth and Goodness. It is in this way that we understand the contrast between philosophers and lovers of mere spectacles in Book V. If the city educates men—as Simonides wanted—the city must be educated previously, and its mechanisms of creation, production and distribution of cultural contents must be transformed into rhythmic formats. This transformation is possible only through the design of a certain politics of the soul: an extraordinary social and cultural project whose failure may imply, irremediably, the dissolution of the human soul into slavery and vice.

I finish with the second question: 'in what sense does Plato assert in *Grg.* 464 b4 that politics is an art *concerned with* the soul?' I think that the answer varies depending on whether we privilege the objective sense or the subjective one in the expression "politics of the soul". In the subjective sense, politics of the soul focuses on the similarity of city and soul and has as a goal the harmonious adjustment of the psychic unity. In the objective sense, however, this politics deals with situational frames in which the individual grows, identifies the external sources which have more influence on his or her psychological configuration and establishes a regulation of them aimed at inner balance. In effect, the city educates men mainly through myths, tales and representations. All in all, the question which Plato raises, appears in front of us almost as a polemical provocation and, first of all, as a political concern which is currently of extraordinary importance: What are the limits of the educational regulations performed by the state? To what extent is the political censorship of narrations and images legitimate? And, finally, in a world like ours, do images—art, theater, films and narrative—really threaten to make us slaves of ourselves?



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**Part II**  
**Plato, Aristotle, and Commentators**  
**on Aristotle**

# Chapter 7

## Platonic Souls in the Cave: Are They Only Rational?



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**Abstract** The allegory of the cave ends with a distinction, at *Republic* 518d-e, between moral and intellectual virtues; Socrates states that the virtue of wisdom (ἡ ἀρετὴ τοῦ φρονῆσαι) belongs to something more divine which never loses its power. However, it is not always or even necessarily aimed at what is good, but it can be directed to evil, as the so called bad-σοφοί do. I will argue that Plato is willing to grant that the training of the rational part by itself cannot be able to bring together philosophy and good political leadership (that is why he highlights the importance of having the spirited and the appetitive parts of the soul rightly educated). From this point of view, the picture of the soul that is drawn from the allegory of the cave should not be considered fully intellectualistic. After analyzing the allegory in search of traces of the tripartite psychic model, I will connect the allegory with *Lesser Hippias* 366a-b and *Laws* III 689a-b, where Plato tries to distinguish between intellectual ability and practical wisdom. The discussion of this distinction, I shall suggest, can be seen as the background to some remarks made by Aristotle in his own discussion of ἀκράσια in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.

### 7.1 Introduction

The allegory of the cave reaches its highest point in *Republic* 518d-e, in a distinction similar to the one Aristotle draws between moral and intellectual virtues. The Platonic Socrates points out that the virtue of wisdom (ἡ ἀρετὴ τοῦ φρονῆσαι), which is different from the other so called virtues of the soul which are closely akin to those of the body, belongs in fact to something more divine. It never loses its power. It is not always –neither necessarily– directed to what is good, but rather it can be directed with all its sharpness and clarity towards wickedness. This passage is significant in indicating Plato’s concern with the difficulties that an intellectualist ethics meets when trying to account for the unjust behavior of those who have fully developed their intellectual skills. In *Republic* VII Plato expresses his reluctance

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toward the straightforward identification between moral correctness and knowledge. He can do this because he has equipped himself with an interesting and complex framework that explains the way in which soul is an ἀρχή of action. He has already sketched, in *Republic* IV, the tripartite soul composition. In this schema, the soul is not identified *tout court* with intellect any longer (as it had been in the *Phaedo*, for example). Rather it is the unifying ground of three different motivational origins for action, which we can see often in conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The soul is a complex unity, the ἀρχή of actions, not merely its intellectual dimensions. In presenting the three analogies of Books VI and VII –the sun, the divided line and the cave—to portray the Good as the μέγιστον μάθημα that should be fully possessed by the philosopher-king, Plato is highlighting the position of the Good, bestowing upon it the highest degree of reality, as the being to be captured correspondingly by the highest human abilities and cognitive procedures. Nonetheless, the allegory of the cave –the only one that tries to make clear the link between degrees of reality, stages of human knowledge and the importance that grasping the Good may have in practical life and, above all, in political leadership—suggests that in order to be able to ‘gaze (theoretically) upon the Good’ one needs the commitment of the three parts of the soul, not just the intellectual or rational part. What *Republic* 518d-e suggests is that the rational part alone is not enough to join philosophy and political leadership together. The rational part of the soul cannot singly achieve the highest goals proposed by the *paideia* illustrated in the allegory of the cave. If the appetitive part and the irascible part of the soul don’t get involved in this educational program so as to be directed to the Good, the whole attempt will fail. In a recent essay, David Sedley made the opposite case. From his point of view, the concept of the soul that appears in *Republic* VII is ‘thoroughly intellectualist’. Although he admits that ‘the *Republic*’s earlier division of the soul into three parts has not been altogether discounted’, he considers however that ‘the lower soul-parts make no contribution to it at all’.<sup>2</sup>

In the next pages, I will sketch a brief reading of the allegory of the cave, and I will try to demonstrate that this perspective, the one that considers the ψυχή referred to in *Republic* VII as basically rational, may distract from some important elements of the analogy. I will also try to argue that the acknowledgment and use of the tripartite schema in *Republic* VII allows Plato to make apparent how a complete education differentiates between intellectual ability and practical wisdom. I take it that this difference, displayed at the end of the allegory of the cave and also in other Platonic dialogues, is important for a better understanding of the background of some remarks Aristotle makes in his own treatment and discussion of ἀκρασία in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.

<sup>1</sup>The three parts of the soul, τὸ λογιστικόν, τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, τὸ θυμοειδές are *principles* of action: any human behavior may be explained in terms of parts of the soul. Behind any action, one part of the soul can be found. Cf. Gerson (2003), and Bobonich (2007).

<sup>2</sup>Sedley (2013, pp. 75 ff.). The only explicit mention of the ‘tripartite psychology’, in *R.* VI 502c–506b, is made ‘in a way calculated to marginalise it’ (Sedley 2013, pp. 75–76).

## 7.2 The Meaning of Coercion inside and outside the Cave

The simile of the cave lays out four successive stages: (1) the life of the prisoners chained in the bottom of the cave; (2) the liberation of one of them, and his departure towards the light outside the cave; (3) contact with realities previously hidden from the prisoner (including the contact with the Form of the Good); and (4) the way back to the cave, in order to get involved in political life. From the very beginning, Plato emphasizes upon the compulsory and coercive character of the experiences developed inside and outside the cave. He first describes the blind and mandatory confinement of human beings in the darkness. Their situation there is an actual imprisonment (*R.* 515b). They are tied with chains (515c). The prisoners cannot move their heads (514b, 515b) or even their necks (515c). In this state of captivity, prisoners experience only impoverished reality, three degrees removed from what is actually real. They can just see reflections of certain images cast by puppeteers from behind a screen. These images copy the real objects located outside the cave. But no prisoner has ever seen these kinds of realities.

The second moment, which illustrates the liberation of a prisoner, also involves coercion and violence from the very beginning. The text, in *R.* 515c, is confused. In Burnet's reading, we have there the coexistence, in the same sentence, of two contrary ideas. There is a process that occurs in a 'natural' way (εἰ φύσει τοιάδε συμβαίνει), but at the same time in a compulsory way (ὅποτε τις λυθείη καὶ ἀναγκάζεται ἐξ αἰφνης ἀνίστασθαι). 'What would be the manner of the release and healing from these bonds and this folly if in the course of nature something of this sort should happen to them...?' (transl. Shorey) In order to avoid this overlap of 'forcing' and 'natural' release, different readings of εἰ φύσει have been offered. But none of them has proved to be very persuasive.<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher and Herwerden read οἷα τις ἂν εἴη φύσει, εἰ τοιάδε..., which finds paleographic basis.<sup>4</sup> Thus we could translate, following C. Reeve, 'Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their foolishness *would naturally be like*, if something like this should happen to them. When one was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up...'.<sup>5</sup> If we accept Burnet's text, we face a hard dilemma to solve. Plato affirms that those philosophers who might have been brought up alone, spontaneously, are justified for not getting involved and for not taking part in 'the problems of the polis' (520b-c), given that they do not share their values. But if the prisoner's release

<sup>3</sup>As Adam (2009) points out, Ast and Stallbaum read φύσει as 'really' (*revera*). Shorey (1969) asserts that φύσις 'in Plato often suggests reality and truth' and he translates: 'Consider, then, what would be the manner of the release ... if in the course of nature something of this sort should happen to them'. Adam (2009, p. 91) claims that, as the prisoners in the cave are in an 'unnatural' condition (παρὰ φύσιν) in the Platonic sense, then this release means a retour to their true nature and so the liberation is described in terms of 'naturalness'. However, in my opinion, with this metaphor Plato is not expecting that we might see these prisoners as if their condition were unnatural; on the contrary, it has just been underlined that they are 'like us' (515b5).

<sup>4</sup>Adam, who prefers Burnet's reading, admits that εἰ does not occur in six manuscripts.

<sup>5</sup>Reeve (2004, p. 209) (italics mine).

in 515c had been a ‘natural’ release, he would no longer be compelled to engage in politics, because self-educated philosophers grown up ‘apart from the will of their political organization’ should be excused from taking part in political engagement, as long as they don’t share the values of that organization.<sup>6</sup>

In the description that follows the liberation, Plato focuses on the compulsory role of the release procedure: although the prisoner had been already released from his chains, he would not suddenly and immediately recover from his mental deprivation (ἀφροσύνη, 515c5). The cure would not arrive automatically. The prisoner would first be obliged to get up, then to turn his head, and finally to look towards the light (515c and e). And if the verb ἀναγκάζω (515c, e) were not enough to emphasize this aspect of coercion, Plato adds that in this situation the prisoner would suffer (515c); he would feel pain (515e) because of the bedazzlement. He would be ‘dragged by force away from there, along the rough, steep, upward path’ and he would not be released before being ‘dragged into the light of the sun’. In this situation, he would ‘be pained’, he would be ‘angry at being treated that way’, he would have ‘his eyes filled with sunlight’ and be ‘unable to see a single one of the things now said to be truly real’. In order to avoid the pain, a pain that involves corporeal as well as psychical dimensions, the prisoner would try to escape from such a promising freedom, and would try to hide back in his previous captivity. The sentence φεύγειν ἀποστρεφόμενον πρὸς ἐκεῖνα at 515e involves two different acts of regression: escaping and turning around, in order to go back to the previous darkness. If we decode the different aspects the metaphor exhibits, it is obvious that escaping means to abandon the education program, and turning back to the practical life of the cave means to reject theoretical study. The prisoner is depicted as running away from education and returning to that inferior epistemological quality of the experiences in the cave: they might be inferior but they do not entail the pain and suffering involved in this strange rebellion. In order to avoid pain, the released prisoner will prefer physical and mental limitations and to be subdued by the quietness of the cave. Plato is illustrating a situation that can be universally acknowledged. The prisoner is ‘like us’ (505a). In order not to feel pain in soul and body while trying to get out of the cave, we will prefer the limited pleasure of that previous way of life, although it means choosing ignorance, physical lowness and paralysis. In Spanish, this well-known feeling can be formulated by the proverb: *‘más vale malo conocido que bueno por conocer’* (analogous to the English one: ‘Better the devil you know than the devil you don’t’). This type of calculation is for Plato not the result of rational reasoning but the expression of the appetitive part of the soul, just as in his analysis of the Platonic theory of motivation, J. Cooper has argued that our aversion to pain constitutes a reaction of τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν. Although we tend to restrict our

<sup>6</sup>The prisoner, who went out of the cave and must now turn back, doesn’t share the values of the cave, but he must nonetheless work together with the other prisoners, by trying to persuade them. How should we understand the imperative that makes happiness complete only if it is brought to the cave? Or should we consider that there is no mandatory commitment and the philosopher can stay nonetheless in the Isle of the Blessed? Or does this compulsory commitment contradict what has previously been said? Mahoney (2005) responds to the dilemma: he claims that the philosopher who does not get involved in politics cannot be happy. Cf. Smith’s view in his 2010, pp. 93–98.

appetitive dimension to the desire for food, drink and sex, the clearest instances of desire, there is a great variety of appetites, sometimes linked to our practice of sport or our political activities, and even with the practice of ‘some little philosophy’.<sup>7</sup> When we make a calculation in order to obtain certain kind of drink or food we are driven by the appetitive part of the soul, not our rational reasoning.<sup>8</sup> The account of Leontius — the character portrayed as having the presence of τὸ θυμολιδές in the soul, in *Republic* IV (439e-440a) — provides a similar case. When he noticed corpses lying at the executioner’s feet, even though the pleasure he experienced was mental insofar as it came from his imagination and not from actually seeing the bodies, such a pleasure was nonetheless inspired by the appetitive part of the soul. In the case of our prisoner of *Republic* VII, the physical pains and psychic irritations are obstacles that threaten the training and education of the philosophical nature before it comes into full bloom, because the desire to escape indicates that the appetitive part of the soul is showing its disruptive power. In this reading, the vision of the prisoner being dragged toward the sun despite his pain and irritation (515c-e) illustrates the formative struggle he has against the impulses and desires of the appetitive part of the soul. The emphasis of the founders and educators in this first level of instruction is concentrated on the re-orientation of the appetitive part of the soul.

In the third level of the allegory of the cave, when those realities previously hidden are finally reached, the Platonic Socrates describes the situation of the prisoner after his first contact with the sun, i.e. with the Good. Once the pain and discomfort of the previous level have been left behind, once the prisoner witnesses the intelligible realities, which are much more real and dazzling than the objects he was acquainted with in the cave, he will feel happy because of the change that has occurred in his life (τῆς μεταβολῆς, at 516c). Furthermore, he will feel pity for those still imprisoned, and he will naturally show reluctance to go back to the cave. For the Platonic Socrates, it seems natural (εἰκός) for those who have reached this stage not to be willing to ‘take care of human affairs’ (517c-d). This is put in words with a fine Homeric quotation from the *Odyssey* XI 489–491 (cf. *R.* 516d5–6). Achilles, in the underworld, regretfully says that he would very much prefer to ‘work the earth as a serf for another man, a man without possessions of his own’ than remaining there as the king of the dead. The cave, i.e., our actual home and way of life in which we have no grasp of reality, is for Plato somehow like hell. The prisoner, who now knows reality, would prefer to suffer pain and exert all kinds of effort rather than share the beliefs and lifestyle (δοξάζειν καὶ ἐκείνως ζῆν, 516d) of the cave in the way he did before. Glaucon repeats this idea: life in the cave is a twofold captivity, both as regards the false opinions held there and regarding the basic animal way of ‘being alive’ implied there.<sup>9</sup> At this point, force and coercion

<sup>7</sup>Cooper 1984, p. 9 and 20, n.13. Cf. also *R.* 561c-d.

<sup>8</sup>Cooper 1984, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>According to Chantraine 1999, pp. 402–403, ‘living’ (ζῆν, in the mere biological sense) is different from ‘way of living’ (βίος, in the ‘cultural’ sense, i.e. a life going beyond the biological existence). The prisoner can deploy the latter way of living only outside the cave, while being educated and trying to grasp the Good (521a).



return. First of all, those men with natural talent for learning will be compelled (*ἀναγκάζω*, 519c) to begin with the higher study. This means initiating the ascent and grasping the Good. But after having reached this first stage in their education the founders won't allow these apprentices of philosopher to do what they are nowadays allowed to (*μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν αὐτοῖς ὃ νῦν ἐπιτρέπεται*, 519d): to stay and remain as if they were already in the Isle of the Blessed, denying to take the way back, the way that goes down to their old fellow prisoners in the cave, in order to take part in their labors and honors, no matter if they are of high value or insignificant.<sup>10</sup> The meaning of the reluctant attitude of the liberated prisoner has been discussed at great length. What part of the prisoner is being coerced? It seems obvious that at least some of this coercion is directed towards the rational part of the soul. At least a part of this remark regarding the dream of the Isle of the Blessed is made to the *λογιστικόν*; this is the only part of the soul which is able to grasp the Good, the expected *μέγιστον μάθημα*. However, is it only the rational part of the soul that makes the prisoner reluctant to go back? Now that the prisoner has grasped the Good, i.e., pursued and reached the highest level of study, and now lives happily (*εὐδαιμονίζει*), having grasped the Good, i.e., having pursued and reached the highest study, why must he still be forced? Must he still be educated?

We could understand this mandatory attitude as a figurative way of representing the internal force that has grown in the prisoner's soul. If he has grasped the Good and this involves having now achieved *σοφία*, by putting this *σοφία* into practice, it should be translated into justice. Then, what kind of external force would compel the young philosopher? If he has grasped the Good, he already has the knowledge of what it is to be *δίκαιος*, and so this coercion could only be some kind of internal force. The young philosopher could not be *compelled* to act with justice because *he is already just*. He could not be forced to be just, but could be forced to exercise the rule of the city (forced, i.e. to act in politics).<sup>11</sup> However, Socrates, one of the founders of this educational program and of its methodology, believes that remaining in contemplation as if one had already arrived at the Isle of the Blessed is not something new that occurs to the released prisoner. Indeed, it is something 'allowed now' among those who have completed the higher studies (cf. 519d). Besides, it is as bad for politics as ignorance is. From this point of view, the reluctance of the young apprentice of philosophy can be seen as a selfish behavior of the soul that should be re-directed, educated again, and thereby transformed.

After grasping the Good, the prisoner is compelled to return to the shadows in the cave. In the 'technical exegesis' Plato provides of the allegory of the cave, he indicates which part of the soul is specifically targeted by this coercion, i.e. which part still needs to be educated. Socrates says that those obliged to return to the cave 'have different honors and a better life than the political' (*ἔχουσί τε τιμὰς ἄλλας καὶ βίον ἀμείνω τοῦ πολιτικοῦ*, 521b). What these 'different honors' are is not there

<sup>10</sup> Who could oblige the prisoner to take the way back down to the cave? The same educators who started this conversation: i.e., Socrates and his companions (Glaucón and Adeimantus), who have proclaimed themselves to be the founders of the city.

<sup>11</sup> This is Mahoney's argument (cf. 2005, pp.81–87; see also 1992, pp. 266–272).

specified, but the reference to τιμαί sets the direction of the compulsory education towards desires of θυμός. This part of the soul is inclined to express itself as anger, feeling of moral shame, outrage and offended sense of justice and, finally, as desire of social assertion.<sup>12</sup> The competitive θυμός of the young apprentice, who was able to gaze at the Good, may now find those labors, duties and honors of his fellow inmates to be insignificant, and make what he takes to be worthwhile (his own esteem) more prevalent. Plato intends to show at this stage—that is, at the stage in which the young apprentice has rationally grasped the Good but has not taken up all of his duties in the spiritual realm (in the realm of θυμός)—that educational compulsion is still necessary in the training of the young apprentice of philosophy.<sup>13</sup> The description of the situation of this young apprentice reminds us of the picture made in *R.* VIII 550b of the one who ‘turns over the government in his soul to the intermediate principle of ambition and high spirit (θυμοειδές)’, and thus becomes ‘a man haughty of soul and covetous of honor (ἐγένετο ὑψηλόφρων τε καὶ φιλότιμος ἀνήρ)’. The philosophical education covers, again, the appetites and the θυμός as well. It is not only nor exclusively an intellectual training.

### 7.3 When Do Prisoners Become Philosophers?

The same passage (*R.* 521a-d) also makes it clear that when young people who want to become philosopher have apprehended the Good, ‘they do not immediately apprehend that they have an obligation to return to the cave’. They may not be ‘expected to realize it, because to get to the Idea of the Good does not give the whole comprehension of all the actions it demands to develop what is Good in itself’.<sup>14</sup> It is still necessary for them to ‘go down’ and get ‘accustomed to seeing in the dark’ (καταβατέον... συνεθιστέον τὰ σκοτεινὰ θεάσασθαι, 520c). For this reason, N. Smith reminds us that ‘calling the returners ‘philosophers’ tends to obscure the critical fact of the incomplete state of their education’. The young apprentices that go down are not immediately ‘philosopher-kings’: for they are ‘many years yet from having the qualifications requisite for this role’.<sup>15</sup> They have to acquire military and political expertise: the Platonic Socrates clearly recommends at least fifteen years for practical training ‘so that they won’t be inferior to the others in experience either’ (ἵνα μηδ’ ἐμπειρία ὑστερῶσι τῶν ἄλλων, 539e4–5).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Cooper 1984, p.16.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Smith 2010, p.94: ‘The returners might well feel strongly a desire to remain rapt in contemplation of the Forms, but when the unjust effect of following this impulse is made clear to them, we can assume their spirited parts –thoroughly trained always to do what is best for the city and to desist from anything contrary to that aim– would resist the impulse to abdicate’. We should also remember that in the *Phaedrus*, Plato locates shame in the horse representing spirit; cf. *Phdr.* 253d-e and 256a.

<sup>14</sup> Brickhouse (1998, p. 149), quoted in Smith (2010, p. 95).

<sup>15</sup> Smith 2010, p. 98.

The allegory of the cave does not end with the contemplation of the Good; and the grasping and gazing of the Good does not imply the end of the educational process either.<sup>16</sup> The goal is the political transformation of a community which, without any philosophical commitment, could remain comfortably hidden in the cave. Accordingly, the ascent and the possibility of getting the non-hypothetical principle do not imply immediately the end of the dialectical path. The way back, departing from the Good, ‘making no use of anything visible at all’, and trying to get the knowledge of all the Forms themselves (511c1–2), is also part of it. The prisoner’s soul is expected to initiate its way down because its education has not been completed. ‘When the philosophers finally see the good itself, they have the infallible, un-hypothetical cognitive grasp of it that is a paradigm of knowledge. But they have no knowledge of anything else until they take the road back down from it, gaining additional infallible, un-hypothetical cognition in the process’.<sup>17</sup> That seeing the Good does not lead to dialectical knowledge immediately is confirmed by the claim in *Republic X* that only the one who makes use of natural or manufactured things has real knowledge ‘about what the good and bad points are in the actual use of the thing he uses’, because it is he who ‘has the most experience of it’ (601d8–10). The one who see the Good is not automatically transformed into a philosopher: he must turn around and descend toward the concrete political practice, and be in a concrete community with concrete human beings, where the Good can be taken as criterion and paradigm (428c11–429a3, 500b8–501b7). ‘The good thus seems to be (or include) the good of a city’.<sup>18</sup>

On these bases we can recognize in the story told by the allegory of the cave the sense of coercion and violence appearing in educational stages not yet accomplished, but still to be performed. Precisely, in the last stage (the fourth in our schema), which illustrates the return of the prisoner to the cave, we find compulsory force again: the newly arrived apprentice would be forced to argue –in the court or wherever— about shadows of justice, and to quarrel in a simple way (the only way that those who have never seen Justice in itself can argue; 517d–e). The fellow prisoners would mock at the young philosopher, they would consider him ridiculous and they would even kill him, if they could, with their own hands (517a). But in this long path from and towards the cave, the philosophically promising youth will become an adult, and then will acquire the necessary age (55 years old) to be able to rule the polis philosophically. But all those years spent on the road will be a continuous process of practical training and scientific learning (cf. ἐν ἔργοις τε καὶ ἐπιστήμας, at 540a). This knowledge cannot be put into souls, as some sophists, who sell superficial wisdom for money, pretend to do. In fact, they just repeat the doctrines they have heard the crowd proclaiming when it gathers together (493a).

At the literal level, those images of violence and compulsory behavior which constitute education may seem to espouse a pessimistic anthropological outlook,

<sup>16</sup>As Rowe (2007, p. 55) points out: ‘the focus is now not so much on the good itself as on ‘our nature in relation to education and lack of education’ (514a1–3).

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Reeve 2010, pp. 221–222.

<sup>18</sup>Reeve 2010, p. 220.

where human beings are seen as preferring bondage, ignorance and darkness, and avoid the risks and the struggle involved in the pursuit of a life of freedom and in facing the truth. But there is also a sense in which this coercion means a deep trust in educational possibilities. I don't think this violence should be understood in the way Stanley Rosen proposed, as 'the philosophical analogue to the need for compulsion in the institution of justice', put into effect through 'physical force, rhetoric, or the artificial construction of the city'.<sup>19</sup> The problem Plato seems to be tackling in *Republic* VII is not the fact that 'reason alone cannot persuade the non-philosophers to give up their chains', but that education by rational means to a rational soul — whose acquisition may imply the necessity to 'work rather as a slave' —<sup>20</sup> is nonetheless not enough for the purpose of establishing a king who is also philosopher. Violence is necessary —in both literal and figurative senses— if we want to redirect, through education, our appetitive and irascible tendencies, deeply rooted in the prisoner's souls.

This is what the Platonic Socrates explains in his own interpretation of the allegory of the cave: education is not what those false teachers claim it to be when they say they can put knowledge in the souls, as if they put sight in blind eyes:

But here is what our present account shows about this power to learn that is present in everyone's soul, and the instrument with which each of us learns: just as an eye cannot be turned around from darkness to light except by turning the whole body, so this instrument must be turned around (περιακτέειν) from what-comes-to-be together with the whole soul (ὅλη τῇ ψυχῇ), until it is able to bear to look at what is and at the brightest thing that is—the one we call the good. (518c-d; transl. Reeve, 2004)

The need of being turned around 'with the whole soul' points in the same direction as what I have already said.<sup>21</sup> I don't find it necessary, as Sedley does,<sup>22</sup> that the references to the different parts of the souls should be made more explicit, because they are implicitly present. Besides, they are sufficiently asserted in the conclusion of the argument. The intellectualist reading of the allegory of the cave finds instead

<sup>19</sup> Rosen 2005, p. 270.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *R.* VI 493d.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. also Rowe 2007, p. 141. The same idea that the different parts of the soul, or at least the appetites, in fact collaborate with the imprisonment is clearly asserted in *Phaedo* 82d ff. (in which the tripartite psychology is, nonetheless, absent): 'Lovers of knowledge recognize that when philosophy takes their soul in hand, it has been literally bound and glued to the body, and is forced to view the things that are as if through a prison, rather than alone by itself; and that it is wallowing in utter ignorance. Now philosophy discerns the cunning of the prison, sees how it is effected through desire (δι' ἐπιθυμίας), so that the captive himself may co-operate most of all in his imprisonment' (transl. Gallop 1975). In this context, in *Phaedo*, the cure for such an imprisonment lies in philosophical education.

<sup>22</sup> Sedley (2013, p. 76): 'No mention at all is made of lower soul-parts with their own distinct desires'. Concerning his remark that '[d]esires (called ἐπιθυμίας at 485d6) are not subdivided between different soul-parts, but are treated as a single psychic force, one that can be channelled either into intellectual pursuits or into those of the body' (Sedley 2013, p.79), it can be pointed out that the distinction between necessary ones and non-necessary ones among desires and pleasures of the three different parts of the soul will be made in *Republic* VIII and IX, respectively, and not at this point of the dialogue.

in this same passage ‘the strongest manifestation of this [intellectualist] approach’. For an intellectualist reading, the ‘occasional reminders’ of the fact that the tripartite division of soul ‘has not actually been abandoned’ cannot be problematic. The Platonic wording ‘leaves it underdetermined whether the intellect could in theory have turned to the truth while leaving the rest of the soul behind’, Sedley asserts. And on this basis, he considers that ‘a *very natural reading*’ of this passage ‘is that when you turn your intellect towards the Good the rest of your mental powers *ipso facto* go along with it’; and also that ‘[t]here is no hint that, in the process of philosophical enlightenment that is at issue here, the non-rational faculties exercise any independent sway’.<sup>23</sup> From my point of view there cannot be such a ‘natural reading’ without changing the sense of the text. The supposition that when the intellect turns around the rest of the mental powers will go *ipso facto* along with it can only work if one tries to read the dialogue as a treatise on scholastic dogmatists, and thus changes into a descriptive assertion what in the exegesis of the metaphor appears actually as a prescriptive exhortation. ‘This instrument must be turned around (περιακτέον) from what-comes-to-be together with the whole soul, until it is able to bear to look at what is and at the brightest thing that is—the one we call the good’ (518c-d). If this subtle idea of ‘what must be done’ (cf. περιακτέον) were to be read ‘naturally’ as the certain and automatic, *ipso facto*, turning around of all the parts of the soul which follow the turning of the intellect, then the greatest part of the allegory of the cave, with its figures of educational coercion, would be unnecessary and irrelevant.<sup>24</sup>

## 7.4 ‘Haven’t you Ever Noticed in People Who Are Said to Be Bad, but Clever ...?’

Socrates words, in *Republic* 518d-519b, complete the description of the whole image showing that the virtue of wisdom is not always aimed at what is good but can be directed to evil, as the so called bad-σοφοί do. These lines include a great number of problems which I will not discuss here, but I will just try to offer a way of understanding the meaning of the appearance of the so called bad-σοφοί. In our previous analysis we have found Plato denying that the prisoner released from his chains might immediately become a philosopher –that is, a person able to rule the πόλις for the sake of what is itself good— just for being wise (σοφός) through intellectual training. He now claims, in the voice of Socrates, that on the contrary, there are several wise or clever men (cf. σοφῶν, 519a) who direct themselves with all their sharpness not towards good but towards evil. Education, as it has been already

<sup>23</sup> Sedley, 2013, p. 80 (my italics).

<sup>24</sup> Adam 2009, vol.2, p. 98: ‘The Platonic *περιαγωγή*, although, or rather, perhaps, because, it applies primarily and immediately to the intellect, effects a moral no less than an intellectual revolution. The moral discipline of Books II-IV, so far from being overthrown, is strengthened and consolidated by being intellectualized’.

said, requires turning the eye of the soul towards what is worth contemplating (519d-e), but this turning must include not only cleverness. In *R.* 518d we read that although the ethical virtues are usually called virtues of the soul<sup>25</sup> they seem to be closer to those of the body: in fact if they are not actually present, they can ‘be produced’ (ἐμποιεῖσθαι) through ‘habit and practice’.<sup>26</sup> The virtue of wisdom (ἡ ἀρετή] τοῦ φρονιῆσαι), on the other hand, seems to belong to something ‘more divine, which never loses its power’ (θειοτέρου... ὃ τὴν μὲν δύναμιν οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυσιν) and, depending on where it is directed to, can become ‘useful and advantageous or useless and harmful’ (χρήσιμόν τε καὶ ὠφέλιμον καὶ ἄχρηστον αὖ καὶ βλαβερὸν γίγνεται, *R.* 518d-519a). Here comes the text which has much to do with the subtitle I have just put:

Or haven’t you ever noticed in people who are said to be bad, but clever (τῶν λεγομένων πονηρῶν μὲν, σοφῶν δέ), how keen the vision of their little soul is and how sharply it distinguishes the things it is turned toward? This shows that its sight is not inferior, but is forced to serve vice, so that the sharper it sees, the more evils it accomplishes. (519a-b, transl. Reeve, 2004)

I emphasize this last (but not lesser) point. The real and actual μεταστροφή, conversion, transformation or redirection in which education consists does not necessarily go together with σοφία. At least, it does not go together with σοφία understood as the ability of having ‘keen and sharp vision’; because it is still possible to have such a sharp technical ability, but to act nonetheless in a wicked, useless and harmful manner. We can find a similar idea suggested in the *Lesser Hippias*. There, Socrates and Hippias have to assert, because their reasoning compels them to admit, that those who deceive are not only clever but φρόνιμοι, expert and wise in the matters in which they deceive (δυνατοὺς καὶ φρονίμους καὶ ἐπιστήμονας καὶ σοφοὺς, 366a). Considered from the point of view of technical expertise, these deceivers are wise, but from a moral point of view — which is subtly avoided in the premises Socrates sets in the aporetic *Lesser Hippias*, probably in order to reach this paradoxical conclusion — it is obvious that they should not be considered good.<sup>27</sup> The idea is analogous to the one expressed at the end of the allegory of the cave: here Plato does not hesitate to include these ‘so called bad but σοφοί’ among those who have *sharp vision* —that is, the acute vision means to have knowledge—; in fact, the bad-σοφοί illustrate the very impact of the virtue of wisdom, ἡ ἀρετή τοῦ φρονιῆσαι, which is stronger than the other virtues. Their highest rational faculties seem to work in a clever manner. The problem seems not to be the lack of cleverness but some kind of failure in the way the desires and irascible tendencies are educated throughout the formative experience, with the purpose of preparing them to accept the guidance provided by rationality: i.e., to accept the rational good as criterion in

<sup>25</sup> Adam 2009, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ἔθουσι καὶ ἀσκήσουσι (*R.* 518e) and also *Phaedo* 82a-b, where temperance and justice, demotic and political virtues, are said to have risen from ‘habit and training, but devoid of philosophy and intellect (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγνουῖαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ)’.

<sup>27</sup> On the sense of the *aporia* here displayed and the avoidance of the vocabulary of *praxis* in this particular argument, cf. Erler, 1991 pp. 230–243 and 234–235, respectively.

the moral life. In what immediately follows, Plato goes on to illustrate this idea: education should make the appetitive parts of soul submit their appetites to rational guidance:

However, if this element of this sort of nature had been hammered at right from childhood, and struck free of the leaden weights, as it were, of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by eating and other such pleasures and indulgences, which pull its soul's vision downward—if, I say, it got rid of these and turned toward truly real things, then the same element of the same people would see them most sharply, just as it now does the things it is now turned toward. (519a-b, transl. Reeve, 2004)

So far I have been trying to show that, in the figurative language of the image, the hammering of all those leaden weights means the redirection of desires, appetitive, and irascible as well. This redirection finds expression metaphorically as coercion, compulsion and now hammering.<sup>28</sup> For the soul, to be redirected or turned around implies not only to establish the privilege of the rational part but, particularly, the possibility that this part may take control of its affections, appetites and anger, inasmuch as the three parts accept the good and rational criterion.

The intellectualist reading of the allegory of the cave focuses on the distinction between some people guiding their glance toward becoming, or looking down (the young philosopher giving up under the pressure of his corporeal tendencies), and some people looking up, gazing at what is true, with their souls fully identified with their intellects.<sup>29</sup> But this reading cannot explain why those who look down and succumb to corporeal reality are considered, in this passage, to belong to the σοφοί and to be the kind of people who use, though for evil purposes, their powerful and 'almost divine' intellectual virtue.<sup>30</sup> As to the direction, i.e. either up or down, which actually determines the way in which our soul uses its sharp gaze in this last passage, I think we should understand it as a residuary presence of metaphorical language appearing in this technical exegesis of the allegory. The figurative image of 'up or down' occurs very often in the allegory of the cave (and in the analogy of the divided line, also, as in many other contexts) to refer to the detachment—or lack thereof—from the familiar shadows of the cave, or the separation—or lack thereof—from the darkness of life in the cave. The idea is to point out the attachment one may have or may not have to the desires and pleasures inspired by the appetitive and irascible parts of the soul. To ascend all the way from the bottom means, in the allegory of the cave, to try to reach the Form of the Good and, as we have seen, to become able to 'bear the contemplation' of the Good (518c), i.e., to admit it as the criterion that is to be employed to evaluate everything in practical and

<sup>28</sup> Socrates says in 519a5 that the soul of these bad-σοφοί is 'forced to serve vice' (κακίᾳ δ' ἡναγκασμένον ὑπηρετεῖν). If force, coercion and violence mean education, then what he says is that the soul of these bad-σοφοί is *educated* in such a way as to make them serve vice and accomplish bad things.

<sup>29</sup> I am making here a brief and schematic abstract of the position displayed in Sedley (2013, p. 81 and 86).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. also the reference to 'practices going counter to these, which have pleasures attached to them and which flatter and solicit our souls' at 538d.



political life. All the theoretical knowledge that must be acquired after gazing at the Form of the Good: arithmetic, plane and solid geometry, astronomy, harmony, they must be learned with the sole purpose of compelling ‘the soul to turn itself around toward the region in which lies the happiest of the things that are (τὸ εὐδαιμονέστατον τοῦ ὄντος, 526e); the one the soul must do everything possible to see’.<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that the purpose is expressed in the same terms used all throughout the allegory: compulsion brings about the educational effect in order to achieve the transformation or conversion of the soul, whose aim is defined in clear practical terms, namely: to acquire ‘the happiest of the things that are’. Now, all these studies that involve the intellectual sphere are propaedeutic regarding the highest one, dialectics, in which philosophers or aspirants to this title must be trained in order to ‘go down again to the cave’,<sup>32</sup> obligated to rule the polis (539e).

When Socrates says, in 519b, that the bad-σοφοί let pleasures ‘pull the soul’s vision downward’, he is clearly indicating, metaphorically, that there are some σοφοί—that is, people who are flawless from the point of view of the functioning of their rationality—who concede the privilege of determining the criterion of their behavior to the irrational parts and to their pleasures. In the image of the prisoner, they are illustrated with the conformism of his appetitive soul, which seeks to avoid the physical or psychic pain, and with the selfish sense of honor of his irascible part of the soul. To say that the bad-σοφοί look downward does not mean that their knowledge or σοφία is false because of their studying or taking care of what belongs to the realm of becoming. Rather, the philosopher himself will have to direct to this realm, when he actually becomes a dialectician, and initiates the compelling way down. But that means that, even though they have all their rational faculties in form, the criterion ruling the action and behavior of these bad-σοφοί is not yet the criterion of the good, the criterion of ‘the happiest of the things that are’. Although their rationality functions perfectly well, if they are ruled by a criterion determined by the appetitive or irascible parts they will end up directing themselves, with all the sharpness of their intellect, to evil. The non-rational parts of the soul may not be explicitly mentioned in *Republic* VII 518d-519b. However they are actually involved in this conflict between up and down tendencies, and their own pleasures may turn out to be a criterion of action in *Republic* IX, where the Platonic Socrates picks up the central idea of the cave, namely, we have to redirect the whole soul toward the good:

So, when the entire soul follows the philosophic element and does not engage in faction (μὴ στασιαζούσης), the result is that each element does its own work (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν) and

<sup>31</sup> Here at 526e (as in the rest of the simile) force (ἀναγκάζει), i.e. education, is employed to produce the conversion of the soul towards a goal defined in practical terms as ‘the happiest of what exists’.

<sup>32</sup> The philosopher must ‘descend’ not only for his ethical and political duties *in the cave*, but also for his epistemic commitment, ‘as it were in battle, running the gauntlet of all tests’ (*R.* 534c) to obtain genuine philosophical knowledge. Cf. Reeve (2010, pp.221–222): ‘When the philosophers finally see the good itself, they have the infallible, un-hypothetical cognitive grasp of it that is a paradigm of knowledge. But they have no knowledge of anything else until they take the road back down from it, gaining additional infallible, un-hypothetical cognition in the process.’

is just; and, in particular, each enjoys its own pleasures, the best pleasures and—to the degree possible—the truest. (586e4–587a2, transl. Reeve, 2004)

If this line of interpretation is convincing, then I suggest that in his own terms Plato is making a contribution here to the question of ἀκρασία. Those bad-σοφοί are persons who have knowledge but nonetheless act in an evil manner. Plato's suggestion here, in the context of the cave, is that this occurs because their appetitive soul and their anger are not accurately guided to follow reason. They tend downward because although they have acute knowledge they direct their action toward what is worst; they are ruled not by reason but by the desires of appetitive and irascible parts of the soul. They are σοφοί, but act in an evil manner. The Socratic principle, *virtue is knowledge*, is thus denied. As we have seen, in *Lesser Hippias* Plato offers an analogous thesis: deceivers are clever, φρόνιμοι, experts and σοφοί in their own matters. Although the contexts and frameworks are different, the same assertion is made: it is possible to have knowledge and still act wickedly. Aristotle takes notice of this paradoxical statement, and in *Metaphysics* V, at the end of his treatment of falsehood (ψεῦδος) he tries to reply to this Platonic puzzle:

The proof (λόγος) in the *Hippias* that the same man is false and true is misleading (παράπροβεται), for it assumes (a) that the false man is he who is able to deceive, i.e. the man who knows and is intelligent (φρόνιμος); (b) that the man who is willingly bad is better. This false assumption is due to the induction (διὰ τῆς ἐπαγωγῆς); for when he says that the man who limps willingly is better than he who does so unwillingly, he means by limping pretending to limp. For if he is willingly lame, he is probably worse in this case just as he is in the case of moral character (ἐπὶ τοῦ ἠθους). (*Metaph.* V 1025a6–13; transl. Tredennick, 1933–1989)

Aristotle points out the difficulty that this thesis involves. Something deceitful is not necessarily better when carried out willingly: *to pretend to limp* is better, for to be willingly lame is clearly worse, as it is to act deceitfully willingly, that is: in the moral realm. Indeed, to avoid the inaccuracy of linking cleverness with vice, as Plato does, Aristotle distinguishes between 'clever' (δεινός) and φρόνιμος, in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI 13.<sup>33</sup> There he defines cleverness (δεινότης) as the ability of producing actions that tend to the proposed end; considered as an ability, it can be found not only in the φρόνιμοι but also in the wicked. However, Aristotle claims, 'this disposition does not compare in the eye of the soul without the aid of virtue' (1144a29–30). For, though φρόνησις may include some kind of δεινότης (ability to produce the actions that tend to the end), its ends are always good. Φρόνησις and δεινότης can be distinguished precisely regarding the choice of the ends toward which each one is directed: while δεινότης is indifferent regarding the moral quality of the end pursued,<sup>34</sup> the end pursued by the φρόνιμος is always good. This is why 'this disposition does not compare *in the eye of the soul* without the aid of virtue'. It is possibly just a coincidence, though a very interesting one in this context, that

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *EN* 1144a26 and 1152a11–14.

<sup>34</sup> 'If the purpose is noble, then it is an ability that might be praised; but if the purpose is wicked it is just trick (παυσουργία)'. Cf. *EN* VI 1144a30; *EN* III 1114b7 and VI 1143b14.

Aristotle takes ‘the eye of the soul’ to mean φρόνησις, and that this is the same metaphor Plato uses in *Republic* VII to refer mostly to the rational part of the soul.<sup>35</sup>

## 7.5 Clever, Wicked, Ignorant, Incontinent

In *Laws* III, Plato raises a question that seems to belong to the same range of problems set out by the bad-σοφοί of *Republic* VII. In this new context he does not speak of bad-σοφοί but of ‘ignorant people’. Nonetheless their harmful behavior is carried out in the same manner and their philosophical meaning seems to be the same. The Athenian Stranger, Clinias and Megillos discuss the origins of a political organization, and the Athenian claims that the ‘greatest ignorance’ (ἡ μεγίστη ... ἀμαθία) is:

That which we see in the man who hates, instead of loving, what he judges to be noble and good, while he loves and cherishes what he judges to be evil and unjust. That want of accord, on the part of the feelings of pain and pleasure, with the rational judgment is, I maintain, the extreme form of ignorance, and also the ‘greatest’ (ἀμαθίαν ... τὴν ἐσχάτην, μεγίστην) because it belongs to the main mass of the soul, for the part of the soul that feels pain and pleasure corresponds to the mass of the populace in the State. So whenever this part opposes what are by nature the ruling principles —knowledge, opinion, or reason (ἐπιστήμῃς ἢ δόξαις ἢ λόγῳ ἐναντιῶται)— this condition I call folly, whether it be in a State, when the masses disobey the rulers and the laws, or in an individual, when the noble elements of reason existing in the soul (καλοὶ ἐν ψυχῇ λόγοι ἐνόντες) produce no good effect, but quite the contrary (*Lg.* 689a-b; transl. Bury, 1967).

As the bad-σοφοί of *Republic* VII, these ‘ignorant people’ can ‘be expert calculators (πάνυ λογιστικοί), and trained in all accomplishments and in everything that fosters agility of soul (τάχος τῆς ψυχῆς)’ (*Lg.* 689c-d). Their deficiency is not cognitive but a failure in their education. The deficiency consists, just as was pointed out in *Republic* VII, in letting the non-rational parts of the soul—the populace of the soul—disobey the rational part in its adherence to the criterion of the best. That Plato is alluding here to a disorder due to a bad education is confirmed by the Athenian’s words, for he asserts that even the souls of those who cannot yet exercise reasoning can have pleasure, pain, friendship and hate *in the right manner*. Then, these young souls can be trained ‘in respect of pleasures and pains, so as to hate what ought to be hated, right from the beginning up to the very end, and to love what ought to be loved’ (*Lg.* 653b-c, transl. Bury, 1967). Again, Aristotle takes note of these remarks<sup>36</sup> and expresses this same idea in *Nicomachean Ethics* II.3, in his analysis of moral virtues. Pleasure and pain that accompany our actions, he affirms, are indications or signals of our dispositions. ‘For the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights

<sup>35</sup> The expression ‘eye of the soul’, as Snell (1946) has shown, is Homeric in inspiration and often employed by Plato: twice in *Republic* VII 518c and 533d; cf. also *Smp.* 219a; *Tht.* 164a; *Sph.* 254a.

<sup>36</sup> On the importance of *Laws* III in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, cf. Frede (2006, pp. 256–257).

in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward.’ And it follows:

For moral virtue (ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετή) is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; this is the right education. (EN 1104b3-12; transl. Brown, 2009)

In *Republic* VII, all the training efforts were focused on making the philosophically promising young people approach the Good not only with their rational ability but with ‘the whole soul’ (518c, 586e). The young apprentice of philosophy should not only reach and grasp the Good, but also learn to be able to ‘bear its contemplation’ (518e), which I understand to consist in regulating his non rational pleasures and pains according to what is really good, with ‘the happiest of the things that are’. The real philosopher should be successfully educated and trained in order to have his non rational parts of the soul in harmony and obedient to his rational part. This is the way he becomes able to love what he believes to be good. This is just the contrary of what occurs with the ignorant person of *Laws* III, who hates what he judges to be good and cherishes what he judges to be bad. In that ignorant person, however, there seems to be some kind of extreme poignancy. In spite of having right opinions regarding what is good or bad, his affections are driven against his reason. Not only he does not cherish what he believes to be good, but he hates it. With the ‘greatest ignorance’ he hates what he believes to be good. Commenting on this text, Strauss suggests that Plato ‘seems to correct the Socratic assertion, according to which it is impossible to know what is to be preferred and yet to choose the worst, or according to which virtue is simply knowledge’.<sup>37</sup> For Strauss, this Platonic page is introducing the question of ἀκρασία: ‘In other words, the greatest ignorance is incontinence’.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Aristotle defines ἀκρασία as a conflict between what reason regards as good and what desire wants, that is, a conflict between what practical reason takes to be the object of pursuit or avoidance and the desire of appetites, grounded on the sensation of pleasure and displeasure.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, the Aristotelian treatment of ἀκρασία involves questions and a peculiar focus that go considerably beyond the much more restricted (or even cryptic) Platonic introduction to the topic. Anyway, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle approaches ἀκρασία from a point of view that –as I understand it– clearly reflects not only the original Socratic inheritance, but also the Platonic challenge posed in *Republic* VII and *Laws* III, with the suggestion that the wise man could be acratice. The Platonic point of view is relevant to Aristotle’s treatment of ἀκρασία first of all

<sup>37</sup> Strauss (1975, pp. 45–46).

<sup>38</sup> Strauss (1975, pp. 45–46). We might be able to discuss what kind of lack of control Plato is thinking of in *Lg.* III: for incontinence (ἀκρασία) always involves for Aristotle the feeling of utter remorse, while the self-indulgent (ἀκολαστής), not the incontinent (ἀκρατής), acts without any form of regret. But a subtle detail of the state of affections of the ‘ignorant’ is not displayed in these Platonic lines.

<sup>39</sup> Zingano (2006, pp. 170–172).

because it furnishes a basic schema of human motivation for acting in terms of a conflict between affections and reason. Aristotle considers precisely θυμός and ἐπιθυμία (the same parts of the soul whose education matters so much and fundamentally the founders of the Platonic πόλεις) as the two possible origins for the acratia behavior. And of course, the incontinence that has its origin in the spirited part of the soul is ‘less shameful’ than that which concerns appetites and pleasures of the appetitive part (ὅτι δὲ καὶ ἦττον αἰσχρὰ ἀκρασία ἢ τοῦ θυμοῦ ἢ ἡ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, *EN* 1149a24–25). The reason offered in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII 5 for this less shameful character is like the one proposed in *Republic* IV: the θυμός, which Plato considers to be an ally of the λογιστικόν, ‘seems rather to listen to reason’, although it often doesn’t hear very well, like those giddy servants, or like dogs.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, the Platonic point of view in *Republic* VII is also relevant for Aristotle as a position that has to be rejected to the extent that it seems to admit that wise men can be acratia.<sup>41</sup> This is a crucial point in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII 3, where Aristotle discusses what it means ‘to have knowledge’ when one succumbs ἀκρασία:

And further the possession of knowledge (τὸ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην) in another sense than those just named is something that happens to men; for within the case of having knowledge but not using it (μὴ χρῆσθαι) we see a difference of state, admitting of the possibility of having knowledge in a sense and yet not having it, as in the instance of a man asleep, mad, or drunk. ... The fact that men use the language that flows from knowledge proves nothing; for even men under the influence of these passions utter scientific proofs and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn a science can string together its phrases, but do not yet know it; for it has to become part of themselves, and that takes time; so that we must suppose that the use of language by men in an incontinent state means no more than its utterance by actors on the stage’ (*EN* 1147a9-23; transl. Brown, 2009).<sup>42</sup>

Aristotle insists on denying the possession of full knowledge to those who act against their reason. They are as if they were asleep, mad or drunk. And, more importantly for my line of reasoning, Aristotle compares them to ‘students who have just begun to learn a science’ but still need to get fully acquainted with this knowledge, for they just repeat it, like actors, without having assimilated it. This knowledge has not become part of their nature (συμφυῆναι) yet.<sup>43</sup> In the metaphori-

<sup>40</sup> *EN* 1149a25: εἰκοι γὰρ ὁ θυμὸς ἀκούειν μὲν τι τοῦ λόγου. See also *EN* 1149b1: ὁ μὲν θυμὸς ἀκολουθεῖ τῷ λόγῳ πῶς, ἢ δ’ ἐπιθυμία οὐ. Concerning the way in which, for Plato, θυμός might be an ally of reason, cf. Boeri (2010, pp. 303–306).

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle does not accept that the φρόνιμος can be acratia; he denies this possibility twice (see *EN* VII 1146a7–9 and 1152a6–8). Cf. Zingano (2006, p. 176), whose analysis, nonetheless, avoids any recognition of Platonic inheritance. That Aristotle borrows some of his remarks from the tripartite soul schema of *Republic* IV has been widely accepted (cf. for example Burnyeat, 1980, pp. 82–84, 90–91) and Broadie, 1991, p. 285), but the Aristotelian acknowledgment of the difference, suggested in *Republic* VII 518d–519a, between pure intellectual ability and practical wisdom as goodness is generally overlooked.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the analysis provided by Zingano (2006, p. 175).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Destrée (2007, p. 145): ‘The verb συμφυῆναι in 1147a22 is understood by non-intellectualist interpreters in the sense that Aristotle is taken as referring to a kind of knowledge which is not yet incorporated or mixed in with the desire to act’.

cal language of the cave, this knowledge the acratice has is the partial knowledge of the young apprentice of philosophy, who has not yet been able to turn to the good ‘with the whole soul’.

## 7.6 As a Brief Conclusion

The philosophical training and education of the future guardians in *Republic VII* involves the tripartite conception of the soul. The rights and wrongs of the large *paideia* that takes place in and outside the cave, with its metaphorical violence and not so metaphorical compulsion, can be properly evaluated solely in the light of its impact in a tripartite soul which acts in practical life. The intellectualist approach to *Republic VII* does not take proper account of all these implicit senses of the allegory. Besides, it prevents us from seeing the continuities discernible between the Platonic introduction of the question of ἀκρασία in *Republic VII* and *Laws III* and its subtle but important reflection in Aristotle’s treatment of it.

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# Chapter 8

## Plato and Aristotle On What Is Common to Soul and Body. Some Remarks on a Complicated Issue



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**Abstract** Aristotelian scholars tend to reject the Cartesian dualism as applied to Aristotelian model of the soul, and favor the view that denies that the soul is radically opposed to body. This is so due the fact that Aristotle takes the living being to be a *unified* whole (composed by form and matter). I start by reminding that both Plato and Aristotle argue that by their very nature soul and body are different, but at the same time they maintain that there are things that are ‘common’ to soul and body. The issue is how it is possible that two entities so different in nature have something in common. I argue that the key to the problem lies in the fact that both Plato and Aristotle regard the soul and the body as capacities, and that – in so far as they are able to act and to be acted upon – such is the ‘commonality’ shared both by soul and body. Given that capacities are relational entities, both of them turn out to be very plastic notions that should not necessarily be understood as entirely foreign to each other.

### 8.1 Introduction

Both Plato and Aristotle famously argue that soul and body are two different kinds of entities: the soul is immaterial and the body material; the former is able to set in motion the body, and the latter is motionless.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, one might assume that by their very nature soul and body are two profoundly disparate entities. However, Plato and Aristotle claim that the living being is a sort of ‘combination’ between soul and body.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, even though soul and body are two disparate kinds of entities, they also hold that there are ‘things that are *common* to soul and body’.

<sup>1</sup>For this point see note 13 below.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Pl. *Phd.* 106e; to be sure, he does not speak in terms of ‘combination’ here, but he clearly states that a human being is a composite of two ingredients: a mortal part, the body, and an immortal part, the soul. But in the *Phaedrus* 246c5 Plato explicitly says that the whole, ‘compounded of soul and body, is called ζῷον’ (see also *Tim.* 87e5–6). In Aristotle the view that the human being is a composite of soul and body is clearer (*Pol.* 1254a34–36, 1277a6; *de An.* 408b11–29, 412a15–19).

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Now Plato as well as Aristotle defended an immaterialist psychological approach; Plato, I hold, revised his own view (first adumbrated in the *Phaedo*) according to which the soul can deploy its activities *independently* of the body.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, even though in the *Phaedo* Plato seems to refer to a certain sort of mutual causal relation between soul and body (79c-80b), in the *Philebus* he explicitly indicates that there are certain things that are ‘common to body and soul’ (33d5–6; 34a3-b8), thus suggesting that it is not possible that the soul develops its own activities independently of the body. The thesis that there are things common to body and soul became a *locus communis* in Aristotle,<sup>4</sup> who attempted to fine-tune such a view in the context of what I will call his ‘middle-path psychological theory’, the two extremes of this middle-path being a ‘crude materialism’, on the one hand, (the atomists), and a ‘pure immaterialism’ (Plato), on the other. Insofar as Aristotle endorses the view that the soul is an immaterial entity (it is a form and an actuality; *de An.* 412a20-b9), he somehow supports an immaterialist approach. But as long as he emphasizes that the soul is in need of the body for developing its capacities, Aristotle rejects the tenet that the soul can continue to exert its powers independently of the body. If an Aristotelian individual is taken to be a combination of matter and form, and a living being has as its matter flesh, blood, bones, nerves, etc. which are organized in a distinctive way that allows the individual to function as the individual at stake – a plant, a dog, a person – works, there is no need to inquire whether the soul and body are one, just as it is unnecessary to ask if wax and its shape are one (*de An.* 412b6–8). Indeed, for Aristotle body and soul are two items which are distinct in nature; however, he is willing to argue that there is no soul independently of a body, and at the same time there is no body (i.e. an ensouled and hence a living body) without a soul in it.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it appears that, even granting that soul and body are two radically different entities, there is a sense in which one should regard them as being two interrelated items, which means that there is a sort of ‘co-dependence relation’ between soul and body.

Now if by their very nature soul and body are different, how is it possible to maintain that there are things that are ‘common’ to soul and body? I will tackle this question by suggesting that the key to the problem lies in the fact that both Plato and Aristotle regard the soul and the body as capacities.<sup>6</sup> If this is really so, ‘soul’ turns

<sup>3</sup>The recollection argument suggests that the disembodied soul still retains its powers (*Phd.* 70b3–4, 76c12–13).

<sup>4</sup>*de An.* 403a3–5, 433b19–21; *Sens.* 436a6–11, b1; *Somn. Vig.* 453b12–15; *PA* 643a35. This topic has been discussed at length in the volume edited by King (2006) (see especially the papers by Morel, Sharples and Rapp).

<sup>5</sup>Both Plato and Aristotle take the soul to be ‘the principle of living beings’ (Pl. *Phd.* 105c9-d4; Arist. *de An.* 402a6–7).

<sup>6</sup>Plato applies the notion of δόναμις to different things (the capacity of a name or a letter, *Cra.* 349b5, 427b5; the power or capacity of dialectics or of the good, *Phlb.* 57e6, 67a14). He speaks of knowledge and belief in terms of capacities (*R.* 477b-d), and takes the soul to be the cause of living for the body, since it provides the body the capacity to breath (*Cra.* 399d12; *R.* 366c). The notion of δόναμις is explored by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* V 12 and IX. It is pretty clear that he conceives the soul as a capacity (*de An.* 413b25–24, 416a19, 422b15, 414a31–32, 433a31-b1. See also *Juv.*

out to be a very plastic notion that should not necessarily be understood as something entirely foreign to the body. As far as the body *is capable* of acting and being acted upon, it can be considered both an active and a passive capacity. If, as discussed below, a certain kind of interactionism can be envisaged in Plato (*Phd.* 79c-80b; 81b-d), he would be in a position to admit that the soul can act upon the body and be acted upon by the body. Indeed, I am willing to hold that Plato was a ‘dualist’. However, by dualism I do not mean a theory that posits a *radical separation* between body and soul, despite their being taken to be two different kinds of entities.<sup>7</sup> Rather, if my discussion of the ‘interactionist passage’ in the *Phaedo* is plausible, one should consider that, even assuming that soul and body are two ontologically different things, they are nonetheless closely related to each other insofar as they can ‘interact’.<sup>8</sup> This interactionist tenet is also envisaged and probably endorsed by Aristotle, who in the *Physics* VII 3 maintains that the perceptive soul is altered by perceptible things, this way implying that the soul and its bodily mover are in spatial contact.<sup>9</sup> But if the soul is what sets the body in motion (*de An.* 415b21–22), one should assume that at some point in the development of his psychological theory Aristotle changed his mind.

My purpose in this chapter is not to challenge the interpretations of other scholars about these matters, but to continue to explore what I take to be a ‘complicated

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467b17; *GA* 736b8, 14, 745b24–25), but he thinks that the notion of capacity can be applied also to lifeless things (cf. *Metaph.* 1019b13–15, where the example of an artificial instrument is provided: a lyre that ‘can be made to sound or cannot be made to sound’) and to ensouled bodies (*de An.* 413a1: ἡ δὲ δύναμις τοῦ ὁργάνου). So nothing prevents one from extending the notion of capacity to the body, which can be considered to be an ‘organic instrument’. For a full discussion of the issue of capacity in Aristotle (with a special focus on its psychological meaning) see Johansen (2012, Chap. 4–5).

<sup>7</sup>On this point cf. Chap. 1, Sect. 1.1; for the ontological dependence of all causal powers (powers understood as properties that are displayed in causal processes) see Ellis (2010, especially pp.135–137).

<sup>8</sup>Aristotelian scholars are used to arguing that the label ‘dualism’ cannot be properly applied to Aristotle (especially when ‘dualism’ means ‘substance dualism’), to the extent that he denies that the soul (the ‘numerical’ or ‘individual’ soul, not the ‘specific’ one; *de An.* 415b7), a ‘substance in the sense of form’ (412a19–20), can continue to exist independently of the body. Moreover, scholars tend to reject the view that Aristotle endorses a dualistic view, since both in *De anima* and in other psychological works he takes the living being to be a *unified* whole (composed by form and matter; see Kahn (1966, p. 44); Morel (2006, pp. 122–124), and (2007, Chap. 3); Charles (2008)). Indeed, if psychological capacities are seen as *functions* of a unified psychophysical whole, the psychological cannot be opposed to the physical and thence there is no ‘dualism’. Yet, insofar as Aristotle distinguishes (like Plato) soul from body as two ontologically different things (this is a usual characterization of ‘dualism’ in contemporary philosophy of mind), it seems to me that one can still say that he also supports a *certain kind* of dualism. Interestingly, Shields suggests that Aristotle adopts a non-Cartesian way of substance dualism (what is called ‘supervenient dualism’ in the domain of contemporary philosophy of mind): the immaterial substance of the soul ‘supervenies’ on the material substance of the body (Shields (1988, p. 106)). For the rejection of the supervenient interpretation of Aristotle’s psychology, see Bolton (2005, p. 216).

<sup>9</sup>*Ph.* 246b24–247a18. This point has been shown and argued by Menn (2002, pp. 86–90), who favors the view that at this stage Aristotle was an ‘interactionist dualist’. I return to this Aristotelian passage in Sect. 8.3.

issue' in any immaterialist psychological theory: the way in which soul and body, being two different items in nature, are related to each other. I will hold that the commonality between body and soul lies in the fact that they, in being passive and active capacities, are in need of each other in order to be what they are. The paper proceeds thus: in Sect. 8.2 I deal with soul and body as what moves and is moved, respectively. I also briefly present the Platonic psychology of the *Phaedo*, and discuss there a passage that shows that Plato already considered the possibility of a certain interaction between soul and body. In Sect. 8.3 and Sect. 8.4 I develop the issue of what is common to soul and body in Plato's *Philebus* as well as the interactionist view defended by Aristotle in *Physics* VII. In Sect. 8.5 I will deal with Aristotle's view that, even though the soul is *in* the body, it is *not mixed* with the body. In this section I briefly refer to Aristotle's emotions (πάθη), his favorite examples of psychological items. Finally, in Sect. 8.6 and Sect. 8.7 I point out some difficulties regarding the way in which the soul is in the body and I provide some concluding remarks.

## 8.2 Soul and Body as Moving and Moved Factors in Plato

The soul-body problem goes back to Plato; he distinguishes the soul (ψυχή) from the body and argues that one's soul is what uses and rules over the body. The 'active property' of the soul makes it 'more valuable' than the body.<sup>10</sup> Now if the soul is the active factor and the body the passive one, and if the soul is able to act upon the body and the body is what allows the soul to deploy its powers when being acted upon, it is clear that both the active and the passive depend on each other. This point is particularly clear in Aristotle, but it goes back to Plato who in a well-known passage of the *Sophist* states that all that has the capacity of acting and of being acted upon 'really is' (247e3: πάν τοῦτο ὁντως εἶναι). Now if the soul is the active item in the active-passive relation, one might assume that even in Plato there is a certain co-dependence relation between soul and body. After all, it is Plato who asserts that there is no active without passive or passive without active (*Tht.* 157a5–6), a view taken for granted and exploited by Aristotle (cf. *MA* 702a13–15; *Ph.* 255b1ff.: whenever it happens that the active and the passive are present, at once the former acts and the latter is acted upon).

But even though Plato recognizes that there is a certain co-dependence between soul and body, in the *Phaedo* he stresses that if we are to have any 'pure knowledge'

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Alc. I* 129e–130c; *Phd.* 79e8–80a6; *Lg.* 896c1–3. In a similar vein, see Arist. *de An.* 430a17. In modern times the authenticity of *Alc. I* has been questioned; the inauthenticity of the dialogue is argued by Smith (2004) and, more recently, by Renaud and Tarrant (2015, pp. 38, 46, and 267), even though they declare that their purpose is 'to explore the hypothesis that the dialogue may be interpreted along the same lines as any other dialogue of Plato' (p. 5). Other interpreters tend to take *Alc. I* to be an authentic work of Plato. For more details on this matter see Chap. 1, n.12 and the literature cited there. It should be recalled that the view that the *Alc. I* belongs to Plato was already defended by Adam (1901, pp. 40–65, cited by Giannantoni 2005, p. 117, note 56).

(*Phd.* 66d8–9: καθαρθῶς τι εἶσεσθαι), we should be freed from the body and contemplate things as they are ‘with the soul by itself’ (αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ, 66e1–2). He adds that after we are dead we shall gain the wisdom which we desire, not while we are alive (*Phd.* 64c, 67d; *Grg.* 524b). But, why is the body, in accordance with the Plato of the *Phaedo*, so annoying? The irrational desires are related to the body, not to the soul (*Phd.* 66b–d), and the body is declared to be a hindrance for acquiring truth and wisdom; it is nothing but a source of confusion and a real evil (66a5–b6). Since the body has need for nurture, Plato says, it fills us with erotic desires, appetites, fears, fantasies of many kinds, and much nonsense. So, our body is an annoying element because it prevents us from having wisdom (φρονῆσαι) and its appetites (ἐπιθυμίας) produce ‘war’ and ‘civil war’ (66b8–c7).<sup>11</sup> In the *Phaedo* the soul as a whole is dragged by the body (not by another part of the soul) toward ‘things that are never identical’ (79c6–7). Thus, the separation of the soul from the body (i.e. death; *Phd.* 67d4) would be indispensable so as to avoid being cheated by the body. Plato warns us that, even though the soul cannot be completely separated from the body while the person is still alive, there is a way in which we can come nearest to knowledge: this manner would consist in refraining ‘so far as possible’ (ὅτι μάλιστα, 67a3) from association with the body. In fact, examining something together with the body is what we do in so far as we are alive. Of course, Plato is aware that one can get rid of one’s body just ‘as much as possible’ (65c8: καθ’ ὅσον δύναται; see also 66b–d); according to him, the soul reasons best when none of the senses troubles it (neither hearing, nor sight, pain or pleasure, and so on). Given that the senses are embedded in the body, maybe the way out is to develop a technique to neutralize the influence of the body upon one’s soul and what is associated to it. But even within this framework, where Plato heavily believes in the necessity of releasing one’s soul from association with the body in order to get ‘what is in itself’, he reminds us of the importance of perception as a previous step to attain what is ‘truly real’ through the argument of recollection, indicating again that the body cannot be completely divorced from the soul.<sup>12</sup>

The view that the soul is the origin of motion is almost a commonplace in Plato. It even constitutes one of the basic premises of the famous argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedrus* (245c). In the *Phaedo* (79e–80a; 98c–e) it is pretty clear that the soul is what sets the body in motion. The argument runs thus: (i) when soul and body are present in the same thing, nature ‘orders’ (ἡ φύσις προστάττει, 80a1) the latter to be a slave and to be ruled (τῷ μὲν δουλεύειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι), and the former to rule and to be the master (τῇ δὲ ἄρχειν καὶ δεσπόζειν). (ii) The soul, in being incorporeal and dealing with the unchanging (this part of the premise is not

<sup>11</sup> Unlike what can be found in the *Republic*, ‘war and civil war’ (πόλεμός τε καὶ στάσις) are not used in the *Phaedo* with reference to an agent who fights against himself, this himself being another part of the soul (*R.* 470b5–470d; 550e9–560a).

<sup>12</sup> As already observed by other scholars, Plato does not say that nothing perceptual is significant: ‘perceptual experience’ is relevant to evoke the Forms, as held by Plato himself, *Phd.* 75a (Dixsaut (1991, pp. 97–99); Rowe (2001, p. 197), and more recently Vigo (2009, pp. 58–61); Trabattini (2011, pp. XLIII–XLV, p. 86, note 98, p.87, note 100); and Casertano (2015, pp. 316–317, 332)). For a similar view (although in a distinct context) see *Tht.* 186b–c.

explicit in the argument, but it clearly can be inferred from the context), is like the divine. (iii) But the divine is able to rule and to lead by nature, while what is mortal is able to be ruled and to be enslaved. (iv) Thus, the soul is like the divine and the body like the mortal.

Now, in what sense can it be said that the soul ‘rules and leads what is mortal, the body’? It seems easy enough to answer this question: I move my arm because I have decided to do that. In Plato’s ontological map, ‘deciding’ is a psychological item, so the soul is able to set one’s own body in motion because the movement of one’s body depends upon one’s decision. This is what *to rule* over one’s own body means: the body does not move by itself.<sup>13</sup> Recent studies have reminded us that Plato does not seem to have regarded the relations between body and soul as constituting a problem.<sup>14</sup> This, according to Dillon, is an issue that appears from Aristotle onwards. Following this view, I claim that in the *Phaedo* Plato clearly contends that interactionism between soul and body is possible and that, in doing so, he appears to have no conflict with his tenet that what moves is the soul and what is moved is the body.

As is also clear in the above passage of the *Phaedo*, Plato holds that to rule belongs to the *nature* of the soul, and to be ruled to the *nature* of the body. Once again, one might easily understand this to mean that a body by itself is motionless, that is, the body cannot move itself and cannot set another thing in motion, either. So, ‘setting something in motion’ does not belong to the body’s nature.<sup>15</sup> But the most appealing point is that, even though Plato provides this argument in favor of the soul as the moving principle, he also allows the soul to be affected by the body as well: the soul as a whole is dragged away (ἐλκεται, 79c6) by the body. Even though the soul *uses* the body to examine something (through the senses), thus highlighting that the soul is the active factor, Plato ascribes the soul a passive role as well. But if we are to accept his claim that the active role belongs to the soul, how is it possible that the soul is dragged away by the body? Moreover, the soul itself (due to the harmful influence of the body) wanders (πλανᾷται), becomes confused and dizzy, ‘as if it were drunk’ (*Phd.* 79c7–8; see also 66a5–6). To be sure, the cause of the soul’s being in such a state is the body, but this introduces a tension, because

<sup>13</sup> In the *Laws* (892a–893a, 895c–896a) it is clear that the body contains no principle of change in itself, and that change occurs (both in the single body and in the cosmos) thanks to the existence of a self-moving soul (at *Phaedrus* 246c4, Plato asserts that the body ‘seems’ –δοκοῦν– to be self-moving due to the power of the soul within it). In the wording of *Alcibiades I* (129c–d), this shows that the soul is *the user* and the body is *what is used*. The ‘user-used terminology’ in reference to soul and body also appears in Aristotle (see *Juv.* 469a33–b1; *IA* 705a19–20; *Metaph.* 1017b3–5), who, in a very Platonic vein, also assumes that ‘what rules by nature’ (τὸ μὲν ἄρχον ἐστὶ φύσει) is the soul and ‘what is ruled’ is the body (τὸ δ’ ἀρχόμενον, *Pol.* 1254a34–36). As is clear, Aristotle also is committed to allowing that the soul moves the body (*de An.* 406a30). The moving power of the soul also is stressed by Plato in the *Phaedo* 98c–e, where Socrates argues that the ‘true causes’ (τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας) of his being seated are psychic items (such as decision and choice; 98e1–4, 99b1).

<sup>14</sup> Dillon (2009), (2013).

<sup>15</sup> This fits well with the normative character of nature as described in *Phaedo* 81a. See also *Phdr.* 245c–d; *Lg.* 895e–896a (discussed by Casertano (2015, pp. 401–402)).



the active role is supposed to ‘essentially’ belong to the soul (it’s what nature orders the soul to do), not to the body.

At this point my suggestion is that Plato advances an idea, widely developed by Aristotle, according to which there is a sort of ‘co-dependence relation’ between soul and body. Although the view that the active factor is the soul is not new in Plato (it goes back to the *Alc. I*, and of course it is present in other dialogues too),<sup>16</sup> the passage in the *Phaedo* is eloquent: the soul uses the body (τῷ σώματι προσχρήται, 79c3) to examine what it examines and it does that through the senses (79c3–4). This means that the body is the *instrument* of the soul, so the preeminent place of the soul is clear.<sup>17</sup> The unsolved problem here, I hold, is that the soul is supposed to be the active principle in the soul-body relation, but the soul is also subject to be affected by the body. If this ‘interactionism’ is possible, one might suggest that the soul is capable of acting upon the body and the body is capable of being acted upon by the soul because both of them are capacities that can deploy their powers when they relate to each other.<sup>18</sup>

### 8.3 Plato on What Is Common to Body and Soul in the *Philebus*

In this section I argue that the ‘body-soul co-dependence model’, so important in the Aristotelian psychology, is sketched by Plato in the *Philebus*. If Dillon is right, Plato did not see any special problem with the mutual body-soul relation. At any rate, I think that one could hazard the guess that he had some worries about the soul-body relation when he continued to think about the issue, worries that prompted Plato to better develop what at this stage of his thought he saw as a problem. In the *Phaedo* the body is seen as disruptive for the soul<sup>19</sup>; but when Plato wrote the *Philebus*, towards the end of his philosophical career, he endorsed a model where the body should not be despised as a mere source of nonsense. In the *Philebus* Plato still thinks that soul and body are two distinct entities,<sup>20</sup> but their existence is possible

<sup>16</sup> *Alc. I* 129c5–e5, 130a1; *Phd.* 245e5 ff.; *Lg.* 896c–897d; 898c–899a.

<sup>17</sup> For the body as an instrument of the soul in Aristotle see *de An.* 407b25–26, 412a27–b6, 412b12, 413a1, 415b18–18, 433b19 *et passim*; *PA* 642a11, 645b14–20. See also *GA* 730b19 and 740b29–34, where Aristotle states that ‘the capacity of the nutritive soul ... *uses as instruments* (χρῶμένη οἷον ὀργάνους) what is hot and cold’.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle’s ‘co-dependence view’ is briefly discussed in Sect. 8.4 below; but see *GA* 766a5–9, where Aristotle reminds us that nature provides each individual with the capacity (δύναμις) as well as the ‘organic instrument’ (ὄργανον), and that there is no sight (i.e. the *capacity* of seeing: ὄψις) without eyes and that the eye cannot be perfected (τελειοῦται) without sight.

<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the soul is negatively affected by the body (which is regarded as an ‘obstacle’ —65a10: ἐμπόδιον τὸ σῶμα— and as ‘what deceives the soul’ —65b11: ἐξαπατᾶται ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ—).

<sup>20</sup> The ‘dualist mark’ in the *Philebus* is clear when he argues that both the body and the soul undergo affections, and that there is a different kind of pleasure and pain, *which belongs to the soul*



due to their close relation (34a-b).<sup>21</sup> So even if Plato is intent on arguing that recollection is a psychological item, it presupposes a previous conjunction of the soul with the body. In a similar vein, perception arises when soul *and* body jointly undergo one affection (ἐν ἐνὶ πάθει ... κοινῇ), and are jointly moved (κοινῇ καὶ κινεῖσθαι, 34a3–5). Plato's important clue here is that perception does not belong exclusively to the domain of the body or the soul; it actually is the result of a process which is jointly undergone by the soul *and* the body. Perception neither is a purely bodily nor a purely psychological phenomenon: it is a bodily event because without a body where a sensation is rooted, there seems to be no sensation: my shoulder hurts because of my arthrosis in it (i.e. because of a bodily condition caused by chronic wear of cartilage). But there seems to be no sensation of pain without one's soul being *aware* of pain.

When Plato distinguishes those affections (παθήματα) that are extinguished within the body<sup>22</sup> from those that penetrate both the body and the soul,<sup>23</sup> he appears to suggest that sense-perception is a sort of awareness. There is a manner in which this passage can be read without making so much emphasis on what is common to body and soul: the body, in being an extended magnitude, *literally* suffers a commotion. For example, when one looks directly at the sun, one's eye is shocked by the luminosity of the sun. By contrast, the soul, an immaterial entity, can only be shaken figuratively.<sup>24</sup> If the passage is taken in this way, my emphasis on what is common to soul and body seems to be mitigated. But Plato proceeds to argue that sometimes the soul 'escapes the notice of' (or 'is not conscious of': λαιθάνειν, 33d8–9) those affections which do not penetrate through body and soul, while it does not escape notice of those that penetrate both. But λαιθάνειν, Plato goes on to argue, does not give rise to any kind of forgetting (λήθη), since forgetting is the loss of memory. However, in the case at stake there is no memory yet, since one cannot talk of the loss of something that does not exist and never has existed. What has happened here is not a case of forgetting but a case of 'non perception', so instead of saying λήθη one should say ἀναισθησία. Perception (αἴσθησις) only occurs when body and soul are jointly (κοινῇ) affected and moved *by* or *in* a single affection (ἐν ἐνὶ πάθει, 34a3–5). Hence αἴσθησις is treated as an affection that is common to body and soul.<sup>25</sup>

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*itself, apart from the body* (τὸ χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς, *Phlb.* 32c3–5. See also 45a and 46a-b).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Phlb.* 34b6–8; according to Plato, the soul recollects when it *by itself* recovers those things that it once underwent *in conjunction with* the body (μετὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπασχέν ποθ' ἡ ψυχῇ).

<sup>22</sup> Before they reach the soul, 'so leaving it unaffected' (ἀπαθῇ, *Phlb.* 33d4).

<sup>23</sup> Experiences that set up a sort of 'commotion (σεισμός), which is peculiar to each as well as common to both' (35d5–6; transl. Hackforth, slightly modified). Aristotle seems to draw on this view when he argues that the instrument (ὄργανον) by which desire moves is already corporeal (σωματικόν); this is why it should be considered among the functions (ἔργα) common to body and soul (*de An.* 433b19–21).

<sup>24</sup> This is Hackforth's interpretation of these lines (see Hackforth (1945, p. 63, note 3)). When explaining the passage, Hackforth says 'the soul or the *consciousness* ...' (my italics).

<sup>25</sup> Perception usually is included in Aristotle's lists of what is 'common to soul and body' (cf. *Sens.* 436a7–10, b1–7; *de An.* 433b19–20).

In my example, the sun directly affecting one's eye is a clear case of an item affecting both one's body and soul. It's the kind of experience the soul is not oblivious to. But how about those affections which are or can be imperceptible? Think of a very superficial wound: you can have a light scratch, and be unaware of that. Plato would explain this by saying that it is an affection which did not penetrate through body *and* soul; such an affection has been 'extinguished' within one's body, without reaching one's soul. So, insofar as the subject does not realize he's been scratched, he is not aware of it, and hence this is not a case of real αἴσθησις.<sup>26</sup>

## 8.4 Aristotle's Interactionism and His 'Middle-Path Psychology'

The last remarks show the importance of the *Philebus* in Aristotle's psychological project.<sup>27</sup> Let's recall that he also endorsed interactionism between body and soul: in sensation and sensory pleasure (but also in the case of virtue and vice) the soul is moved by the body. At *Physics* VII 2 Aristotle is concerned with proving that between the agent of alteration and the altered object there is no intermediate. 'Alteration' should be taken in the restrictive sense Aristotle gives to the term ἀλλοίωσις in *Physics* VII (244b2-248a6), i.e. as 'perceptible qualities', such as being heated, sweetened, compressed, dried, or made pale (244b6: κατὰ τὰς παθητικὰς καλουμένας ποιότητας).<sup>28</sup> He stresses that these processes can take

<sup>26</sup> When commenting on *Phlb.* 33c8–11 Delcomminette (2006, p. 314) speaks of αἴσθησις as the 'simplest stage ... which already involves *consciousness*, to move towards the more complex stages, i.e. memory, recollection, and desire'. In fact, insofar as sense-perception shakes both soul and body, it suggests the idea of 'perceptive consciousness' in the sense that the person experiencing a sensation can become cognizant about what he or she is experiencing. What is common to soul and body in Plato is also clear in his characterization of pleasure as 'restoration (ἀναχώρησις) of the natural condition of the living being' (*Phlb.* 32b2–4), when he argues that pleasure and pain do not belong exclusively to the bodily domain, since desire (ἐπιθυμία) belongs to the soul but it occurs *through* the body (in the *Phaedo* Plato attached desire to the body).

<sup>27</sup> Even in the case that I am right and the *Philebus* really constitutes an important antecedent to Aristotle's psychology (and also in his moral theory: the requirements of the good distinguished by Plato in the *Philebus* —perfection, sufficiency, and choiceworthiness— were taken into account by Aristotle; see *EN* I), Aristotle objects to Plato that pleasure is a certain kind of becoming (γένεσις, *Phlb.* 53c-55a; see Aristotle, *EN* 1173a29-b7, 1174b4-1175a4). As indicated by Hackforth (1945, pp. 105–106) and more recently by Migliori (1998, pp. 266–267) and Carone (2000, p. 265), Socrates (Plato) never endorses the view that pleasure is a process of becoming, and he prefers to treat it in a conditional way (see *Phlb.* 54d1: ἡδονὴ γε εἴτερ γένεσις ἐστίν). But given that the thesis that pleasure is a becoming coincides with an important aspect of Socrates' argument to prove that pleasure is not the good (in fact, if pleasure is a becoming, it does not meet the requisite of perfection, 20d1–3), it seems irrelevant whether or not he subscribes to that position, since it is functional to the Platonic refutation of hedonism (my view on this topic partially agrees with what is argued by Delcomminette (2006, pp. 497–500)).

<sup>28</sup> See also *Ph.* 244b7–8, 245b13, 246a.

place both in animate and inanimate things, surely because both of them are similarly affected when they are heated, sweetened, etc. (244b7–9). What Aristotle contends is that, where animate things are concerned, these processes occur whether one is talking about the non-sensitive parts (μὴ αἰσθητικά) or the sensations themselves (αὐτὰς τὰς αἰσθήσεις). In fact, even ‘the senses (αἰσθήσεις) are somehow altered, since an actual sensation (ἡ γὰρ αἴσθησις ἢ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν) is a change that takes place *through the body* (i.e. through the sense-organ) when the sense is being affected in a way’ (πασχούσης τι τῆς αἰσθήσεως, 244b10–12). If this is so, Aristotle concludes, in all the cases in which the inanimate undergoes alteration, the animate undergoes alteration as well, but the opposite is not true since the inanimate does not undergo alteration in respect of sensations. The inanimate is unaware (λανθάνει) of undergoing alteration, whereas the animate is aware (οὐ λανθάνει) of it (it does not matter that the animate sometimes may be unaware of such an alteration when it does not take place in the senses; *Ph.* 244b15–245a2).

Further on, Aristotle argues that virtue and vice cannot be alterations, nor can the acquisition and loss of them be so. They come into existence when the perceptive part of the soul is altered by perceptible objects, since ‘all virtue is concerned with *bodily* pleasures and pains’ (*Ph.* 247a8). These pleasures and pains depend either upon acting or upon remembering or upon anticipating (*Ph.* 247a9: ἐν τῷ πράττειν ἢ ἐν τῷ μεμνήσθαι ἢ ἐν τῷ ἐλπίζειν). Pleasures and pains depending upon acting are related to perception; this should be a clear clue that there is a perceptible agent setting them in motion as long as they are aroused by something perceptible (ὅπ’ αἰσθητοῦ τινὸς κινεῖσθαι, 247a10–11). But even those pleasures and pains that depend on remembering and anticipating are based on perception as well, but according to the *Physics* version, there is perception when perceptible things affect the soul.<sup>29</sup>

The upshot of this discussion is that the soul is able to set the animal (i.e. the composite) in motion<sup>30</sup> as well as the body is capable of moving the soul. Besides, Aristotle already seems to have in mind two crucial claims that appear again in his mature works: (i) the soul is neither without body nor a certain body (*de An.* 414a19–20; *Sens.* 436b6–7). Indeed, ‘sensation’ somehow is soul, but in order to be what it is, it needs the body as its instrument. (ii) Inversely, the living body (τὸ ἔμψυχον) is ‘conscious’ of its own qualitative states because of the soul (in fact, only the animal can be aware of its being heated, sweetened, and so forth). So, in addition to the fact that the body is a living body due to the soul, the soul allows the animal to be aware of its own affective states. Besides, given that any case of alteration requires the agency of perceptible things, the ultimate agent of alteration (τὸ ἔσχατον ἀλλοιοῦν) and the first altered object (τὸ πρῶτον ἀλλοιούμενον) are continuous, i.e. they are ‘in contact’ (ἄμω, 245a4). In the case of physical contact (as the continuity between the body which is being altered and the air, or the contact between the color and the light) this is pretty clear. But Aristotle assumes that the

<sup>29</sup> One can experience pleasure or pain when remembering what one has already experienced or when one anticipates what one is about to experience. This evokes Plato, *Phlb.* 35d–36c, 39d–e.

<sup>30</sup> See *Ph.* 243a12–15, 252b22–23.

same goes for sight, hearing, and smell, for in these cases the air is the first mover with regard to what is moved. The contact between the body and the air, the color and the light takes place between bodies. But Aristotle extends his ‘contact thesis’ when positing that the *light is continuous with sight*. The same occurs in the case of tasting, inasmuch as the flavor is in contact with the sense of taste. The body and the light, the color and the light are bodily (although according to Aristotle, light ‘in general’ is not a body but a ‘presence of fire’ in the transparent), so what they have in common is that they have a ‘corporeal character’. But light and sight are two different kinds of items: the former is a body and the latter (the sense of sight) is an incorporeal. However, the light (or rather a visible object, which is visible because of light), a body, is able to activate the capacity of seeing.<sup>31</sup> So what is common to light and sight is that they are capacities: the light is an active capacity (in fact, it is an actualized body endowed with active powers), and the sight is a passive capacity that can be activated by the light’s action (i.e. by the visible object).<sup>32</sup> This in a certain way illustrates what I have called the ‘co-dependence thesis’ (which is so obvious in *De anima*), a view that somewhat is already present in *Physics* VII (251a12–16).

Just as in the passage of Plato’s *Phaedo* discussed above, the soul-body interactionism (apparently supported by Aristotle) introduces the problem of how it is possible to maintain the view that the soul is the active factor in the soul-body relation. It is true that the interactionist view is abandoned in *De anima*, where Aristotle emphasizes the primacy of the soul as the mover of the body. But he also emphasizes the co-dependence between soul and body (even though the causal power belongs to the soul; *de An.* 415b8–20). It is clear that Aristotle does not endorse substance interactionism (insofar as he takes the soul to be a form that is what it is within the composite), but he does support the (Platonic) view that the soul (an immaterial entity) has causal powers over the body. Like Plato, Aristotle holds (maybe drawing on the *Philebus*) that perception is a phenomenon which neither is *purely* bodily nor *purely* psychological. In his view, there is a sense in which the extra-mental perceptible object (αἰσθητόν) can be regarded prior to perception. But such priority is not necessarily temporal, since at the level of the temporal analysis what occurs between the perceptible object and perception is a sort of contemporaneity that should obtain at once in order that there be perception *and* a perceptible object. However, Aristotle argues that the perceptible item is already an ‘actualized object’ (even though in order to be something perceptible it should be ‘intended’ by a percipient that is perceiving the perceptible object as being a perceptible object). That is why, although Aristotle clearly points out that the perceptible (what sets the capacity of perceiving in motion) is by nature prior to what is moved (i.e. perception as the capacity to perceive; *de An.* 417a6–8), there is a sense in which the mover (i.e. the perceptible object) and what is moved (the capacity to perceive) are reciprocal.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Without light colors remain invisible (*de An.* 420a27–28; see also 418a26–b2, 429a4, 430a15–17).

<sup>32</sup> For the distinction active-passive capacity see *Metaph.* 1021a14–19, 1046a11–27.

<sup>33</sup> For evidence see Arist. *de An.* 417a6–20, 425b26ff., 428a5ff.; *Metaph.* 1010b30–1011a2, 1047a4–6. Some scholars have attempted to prove that Aristotle’s account of perception is

Aristotle's distinction between potentiality and actuality typically proceeds thus: if an  $x$  can be considered as a potentiality, such  $x$  can be considered in terms of actuality as well. A potentiality is susceptible to being actualized, and given that αἰσθάνεσθαι can be understood in potentiality, it can be actualized. A perceptible body, an 'actual object', is capable of activating the soul (i.e. the soul understood in its passive way —the capacity to perceive— can be acted upon by a body).<sup>34</sup> Sensation in actuality is a certain kind of movement that obtains *through* the body, this body being the material support enabling the soul to deploy its powers. That is why perception is not a property of the body, but is *common* to soul and body: both capacities, the bodily and the psychological, are necessary in order to produce a case of αἰσθάνεσθαι. As is obvious in this passage, in the account of perception the active role is played by the body, not by the soul. But again, the active-passive relation is understood in terms of capacities; in fact, a body deprived of soul (a stone) cannot perceive, since perception in the strict sense is 'perception in actuality', not the capacity to perceive. But a stone, an αἰσθητόν, even though it is *able to actualize* the capacity to perceive (which belongs to sight, i.e. the 'capacity to see'), it *does not have* the capacity to perceive since it is a soulless body. A stone, like any other extra-mental object, is capable of 'triggering' perception, but perception in the strict sense is a form, an activity of the soul, and as such it is an immaterial entity.<sup>35</sup>

It is worth noting that all the examples provided by Aristotle of what is 'common to soul and body' are psychological items (perception, memory, rage, appetite —or 'in general desire'—, pleasure and pain; *Sens.* 436a8–10). At first sight, this seems to suggest that, even though they are *common* to soul and body, they are particularly 'rooted in the soul', so to speak. But that cannot be strictly the case, since, as the argument goes along, Aristotle adds that it is clear that 'all the mentioned things' are common to soul and body, for they all either occur *accompanied by* or *through* perception.<sup>36</sup> But the most important point, I hold, is that Aristotle states that 'perception occurs *because of* the soul *through* the body' (διὰ σώματος γίγνεται τῇ

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described as a purely material process (Slakey (1993)). According to Slakey, 'Aristotle tries to explain perception *simply* as an event in the sense organs' (the emphasis is mine) or as 'the movement that occurs in the sense-organs, not some psychic process in addition to the movement in the organs' (1993, pp. 75, 77). Perception, though, understood as an activity (of the capacity to perceive) already is an immaterial item (both activities and capacities are immaterial; *de An.* 424a32–34); this objection is recognized by Slakey (1993, p. 81), even though he insists that Aristotle does not abandon his view that perceiving is 'a sense organ becoming  $x$ '. What activates the sensory capacities are external sensible objects (*de An.* 417b20–21), and such external objects have an effect upon the sense organs. But this only accounts for the *mechanism of the physiology of perception*, that mechanism not being the same as perception itself. As far as I can see, when explaining what αἰσθησις is, Aristotle rejects any kind of explanation given *only* in terms of the causal action exerted by the (material) components of bodily objects (cf. *Somn. Vig.* 454a8–11). A detailed critique of Slakey's view, can be found in Sorabji (1979, pp. 53–56).

<sup>34</sup>As is clear in this passage, the soul is depicted as a 'passive capacity' and the perceptible object as an 'active capacity'.

<sup>35</sup>See *de An.* 432a2–3, where αἰσθησις is the form of perceptible objects (εἶδος αἰσθητῶν).

<sup>36</sup>On the priority of αἰσθησις in this passage see Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In librum de sensu commentarium* 2.21–24.

ψυχῇ, *Sens.* 436b6–7), bestowing up the soul, once again, the active causal role and highlighting the function of the body as the instrumental support that allows the soul to deploy its capacities.<sup>37</sup>

Now, if Aristotle's view that psychological capacities should be taken as *functions* of the living being (the latter supposedly being a *unified* psychophysical whole) is at all reasonable, one might more easily understand why he does not seem to believe that there is a serious problem that things such as perception, memory, appetites, pain and pleasure are 'common to soul and body'. However, he appears to suspect that this matter is in need of some clarification. And this is so, I contend, because when Aristotle must explain the way in which the soul (and more specifically the νοῦς) is in the body, he must clarify that the soul (especially in its function of thought) is *not mixed* with the body.

## 8.5 Thought, Emotions, and the Soul-Body Relation

Without the presence of the soul in the body, such a body could not be a living body. This is the easy part of Aristotle's theory: if the soul is the principle of life, there is no life without a soul, which makes the body function in a 'vital sense'. The difficult part of the theory deals with the fact that, even though some psychological items (such as perception, emotions, memory) are 'common' to body and soul, body and soul are *not* mixed and, what's more, if body and soul are so different *in kind*, it is hard to imagine what properties they share, so we can say that there are things that are common to soul and body.<sup>38</sup> Aristotle seems to acknowledge the possibility that "the soul and the body" are mixed, but he rejects such a possibility on the grounds that the soul is not a body (*de An.* 412a17–20). When explaining why thought cannot be mixed with the body, Aristotle argues thus: thought cannot be mixed with the

<sup>37</sup> I'm aware that the interpretation of the dative τῇ ψυχῇ (in the just cited line of *Sens.*) is controversial. Johansen (2006, p. 146) reads 'perception happens *to the soul*' (see also Johansen 2012, 261). Morel, following Burnyeat's suggestion (who quotes *de An.* 408b15 as a parallel passage), gives it an instrumental sense ('datif de moyen'; Morel, 2007, p. 81, n.1). But in the *de An.* passage τῇ ψυχῇ can have a causal role as well. One could object to my reading that, in the strict sense, 'perception' is not different from 'soul', so it is not the case that perception occurs *because of* the soul. But the causal sense of the dative may be depicting the idea that perception occurs through the body when the individual's soul 'intends' the extra-mental object as being perceptible, thus allowing perception to take place. Sometimes Aristotle is interested in emphasizing the dependence of the perceptible object on the animate being that is able to perceive 'because of' its soul (after all, both perceptible objects and perceptions are affections of the perceiver; cf. *Metaph.* 1010b30–1011a2). More recently, Shields (2016, p. 95) has interpreted *De sensu* 436b6–7 as 'perception comes about *through* the body *in* the soul' (Johansen's and Shields' versions, unlike Morel's and mine, obscure the active character from the dative τῇ ψυχῇ).

<sup>38</sup> Actually, Aristotle is mainly thinking of the rational soul when he states that νοῦς is not mixed with the body (*de An.* 429a18; 24–25). But to some extent this distinction can be applied to the other two types of soul (nutritive and perceptive), insofar as the most important idea is that the soul, in being an immaterial entity, cannot be *mixed* with the body.



body, since then it would become ‘physically qualified’, i.e. it could be said that it is either cold or hot, that is, it would have perceptual qualities (*quod non*), and there would be an organ for it (*de An.* 429a24–27).<sup>39</sup> In addition, one should recall that, in Aristotle’s view, a mixture (μίξις) can only take place among bodies (in fact, he maintains that those agents which involve a contrariety are capable of being mixed, for these are such as to be able to be acted upon by one another; *GC* 328a31–33; 328b22). So, even though the soul is *in* the body, the soul is not mixed with the body (and νοῦς indeed is ‘soul’ or rather a kind of it).

Even though Aristotle must be clarifying that the soul is *not* blended with the body<sup>40</sup> and is not a body, it is always ‘located’ *in* a body and exists *through* a body (*de An.* 403a16–19, 414a19–20). This emphasis can be understood as one of Aristotle’s ‘healthy’ attempts to abandon Plato’s ‘substance dualism’, according to which the soul can keep on existing independently of the body (*Pl. Phd.* 78c–79b). Aristotle, like Plato, believes that body and soul are different items but, unlike the Plato of the *Phaedo*, he argues that the soul cannot continue to develop its proper vital functions independently of the body and preserve its psychological powers.<sup>41</sup> In his nuanced formulation of the issue Aristotle seeks to make plausible the already quoted view that, although the soul is not a body (and on this point, Plato is right), it does not exist without a body (this is what Plato failed to note, Aristotle seems to think; *de An.* 414a19–20). This is a reasonable way to adopt a middle path between two extreme positions.

Aristotle tends to emphasize the dependence of thought on perception and its contents: if there is no thought without an image,<sup>42</sup> and if there is no image without perception, it seems that αἰσθησις must be taken to be a sort of necessary condition for thinking. In spite of the fact that he denies that there is a sensory organ of thought, he apparently suspects that, in keeping with his hylomorphism, an ‘organic ground’ for thought should be assumed.<sup>43</sup> The organic base of thinking is only a

<sup>39</sup> A detailed reconstruction of the argument can be found in Shields (2016, pp. 300–301), who favors the idea that the claim that there is no organ for νοῦς is an ‘implicit addition, not in the text, but accepted by many translators’ (p. 301). Maybe Shields is right when suggesting that it is an ‘implicit addition’; but it is also certain that cold and hot can only be perceptual qualities of a body, this body being a sense organ (this must be the reason why interpreters accept that addition).

<sup>40</sup> See *de An.* 407b1–5, 429a24–25; cf. also *Sens.* 440b1–25, where it is also clear that mixture is among bodies.

<sup>41</sup> The problem that the soul can continue exerting its powers when separated from the body is envisaged by Plato as well; see especially *Phd.* 77c1–5, where the character Cebes notices that, even accepting that the soul existed before one was born, further proof is needed in order to show that, after one’s death, the soul continues to exist ‘no less’ (οὐδὲν ἧττον, 77c4) after we have died. Thus, after admitting that the soul continues to exist after death, the relevant issue is whether or not our soul preserves its psychological powers. As is clear, although Plato thinks that the soul continues to exist after death, he casts doubts (through the character Cebes) on the fact that the soul preserves its powers.

<sup>42</sup> *Mem.* 449b30–45a1; *de An.* 427b2, 429a9, 432a10–14.

<sup>43</sup> Even though Aristotle denies that there is an organ for thinking, he takes the heart to be the physical center of the animal’s mental life (*de An.* 403a31, 432b31, 408b25. The heart is ‘like the acropolis of the body’; *PA* 670a25–26). Aristotle’s cardiocentrism is discussed at length by Morel



necessary condition, and it would not be indispensable to suppose that, when such an organic base is destroyed, thinking is also destroyed. At any rate, it is pretty clear that without that organic base (in the required good condition) intellectual activities cannot take place.<sup>44</sup> Thinking as a psychological activity that lack an organic base introduces a certain tension in the Aristotelian psychological model, because it claims that there is thought independently of the body, which somehow would violate the fundamentals of Aristotle's hylomorphism. In *de An.* II 4, where he develops an argument against the survival of the 'numerical' soul and in favor of the persistence of the 'specific' soul, he appears to put the issue in more 'Aristotelian terms': the soul is immanent to or remains within the body, so in so far as the soul is a form, there cannot be, one might assume, an intellectual activity independently of the body.<sup>45</sup>

As already said, the *πάθη* constitute excellent examples of psychological items for Aristotle, and as long as they are 'enmattered structures' (*ἐνυλοὶ λόγοι*; *de An.* 403a25), they are particularly helpful in highlighting the 'co-dependence view'.<sup>46</sup>

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(2011, pp. 70–74), who shows both the crucial place the heart has as the basic principle of life and its role regarding cognitive functions and action. For the relevance of the heart in Aristotle's physiology see also the sophisticated account provided by Corcilius and Gregoric (2013, pp. 58–60). In *de An.* 422b34–423a1 Aristotle is probably thinking of the heart as the sense-organ for touch as internal (*τὸ αἰσθητήριον ἐντός*; as suggested by Rodier (1900, p. 325), flesh would be just the means. The heart also is the seat of emotions such as anger and fear; *de An.* 403a31, 408b8, 432b31). In fact, the heart constitutes the principle of movement and dominant sensation, or as Aristotle says in *Juv.* 467b28, it is the common sense organ for the specific organs of sense, in respect of which the 'actual sensations' must meet (cf. *Juv.* 469a20–23; *PA* 656a27–657a12).

<sup>44</sup>In order to prove that what decays is the sense-organ, not the psychological power, Aristotle provides his well-known example of the eye: if an old man could get hold of an eye which works as an eye (i.e. as an eye that is able to see), he would see just like a young person. Thus old age consists in something that has happened not to the soul (*οὐ τῷ τὴν ψυχὴν τι πεποιθέναι*), but to *that in which the soul is* (*ἀλλ' ἐν ᾧ*), that is, to the body (*de An.* 408b20–23). Aristotle was aware of this problem, an issue that produced a major tension in his psychological theory (for a thoughtful discussion of this point see Zucca (2015, pp. 270–272)).

<sup>45</sup>A similar argument is developed by Aristotle in *GA* 731b31–732a3 (he is drawing on Plato's *Symposium* 208a–b). For the difference between 'numerical and specific' identity see Arist. *Metaph.* 1018a5–9. In his massive commentary on Aristotle's *de An.* Movia takes this passage to be a 'digression on the eternity of the species as the end of the living beings' (Movia (1991, pp. 298–299)). In my view, the passage suggests more than that, since it can be read as the only place where Aristotle argues *against* the persistence (and thereby the 'immortality') of the individual soul.

<sup>46</sup>Barbotin-Jannone (1966, *ad loc.*), Movia (1991, *ad loc.*), Bodéüs (1993, p. 84, note 3), Barnes (1979, p. 36, note 5), Polansky (2007, p. 56), and Shields (2016, p. 98) read *ἐν ὕλῃ* with the codd. C E. Although *ἐνυλοὶ* is a *hapax*, I maintain Ross' reading (*ἐνυλοὶ*), endorsed by the codd. UXT<sup>p</sup> ('inferior manuscripts', according to Shields) and by all the Ancient and Medieval commentators (cf. Pseudo-Philoponus, *In Aristotelis de Anima libros commentaria* 54.12–15; 55.23; 63.19; 568.23–24; Pseudo-Simplicius, *In libros Aristotelis de Anima commentaria* 20.5; Themistius, *In libros Aristotelis de Anima paraphrasis* 7.24–25; Sophonias, *In libros Aristotelis de Anima paraphrasis* 8.24). Cf. also Rodier (1900, pp. 34–35). I think that no matter the reading one chooses, the sense is not *substantially* altered (for discussion see Polansky (2007, p. 56), Zucca, (2015, p. 81, note 26), and Shields (2016, pp. 98–99)).

The dialectical definition of anger (ὀργή) clearly states that a πάθος is a sort of ‘desire’<sup>47</sup>; this explains why anger (like any other affection) is an ‘enmattered λόγος’: it is a λόγος because, as far as it is a desire (and hence a psychological item), it is ‘soul’ (i.e. a form or structure; *de An.* 412a19–20).<sup>48</sup> Besides, anger is ‘enmattered’ because a desire exists in an individual: each person or animal is the composite that gets angry. The dialectical definition of anger points to the character of λόγος, which is a property of any affective state, and the ‘physical’ definition (‘boiling of the blood or heat around the heart’) points to the characteristic feature of ἔνυλος, which is also present in any emotional state, insofar as any emotion is located in a composite and has a corporeal manifestation: the one who is ashamed blushes, and the one who fears death turns pale.<sup>49</sup> Both of them, Aristotle claims, appear to be ‘in a certain sense’ bodily (σωματικά δὴ φαίνεται πως), which seems to be a property of affection rather than of a state or condition (πάθους μᾶλλον ἢ ἔξεως εἶναι. *EN* 1128b14–15). When he asserts that a person who ‘reddens’ blushes because of shame (διὰ τὸ αἰσχυνοθῆναι) is not called ‘red’, nor is a person who becomes pale because of fear (διὰ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι) called ‘pallid’, and that this person is said to have been experiencing a certain kind of affection (πεποιθέναι τι, *Cat.* 9b30–33), he seems to be attributing a certain causal role to the *pathos*, although actually such causal role belongs to the belief and the representation.<sup>50</sup> That is, the shame or fear the subject is experiencing makes the body turn red and pale; after all, it is not the soul that is angry, pained, pleased, confident or afraid, but the composite, the person who experiences these things ‘because of’ his soul (*de An.* 408b14–15: τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῇ ψυχῇ).<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> It is the ‘desire (ὄρεξις) for returning pain for pain’ (*de An.* 403a30–31). The kind of desire Aristotle is thinking of is θυμός; see *Rh.* 1378a30–32, where anger is ‘desire accompanied by pain for a conspicuous retaliation (τιμωρία φαινόμενη) due to a conspicuous belittling (ὀλιγωρία)’. Aristotle takes ὀργή and ἐπιθυμία to be ‘irrational desires’ (1369a4–7; at line 7, ὀργή is replaced by θυμός).

<sup>48</sup> Polansky (2007, p. 56) explains the sense in which Aristotle takes emotions to be λόγοι by suggesting that they ‘can be reasonable and connected with speech —hence they enter so prominently into ethics, rhetoric, poetics, and perhaps even philosophy generally ...’. This is a nice manner to tackle the issue, but this does not follow straightforwardly from Aristotle’s characterization of emotions as ἔνυλοι λόγοι here, where the focus is put on the fact that emotions are ‘formal structures’.

<sup>49</sup> See *de An.* 403a16–18 (for a detailed examination of emotions as ἔνυλοι λόγοι see Chap. 9, Sect. 9.2 in this volume). Interestingly, Themistius provides a conflated version of both definitions of anger: ‘boiling of the blood around the heart *because of* a desire (δι’ ὄρεξιν) for retaliation’ (*In libros Aristotelis de Anima paraphrasis* 7.27). That is, the cause of anger (and hence of its bodily manifestation) is desire; as is clear, Themistius is highlighting the active character of the soul.

<sup>50</sup> One’s belief plays a causal role (see the case of anger in *Rh.* 1382b29–31). According to Aristotle, when the individual’s belief changes, the emotion disappears.

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle reminds us that when being angry (τὸ ὀργίζεσθαι) is defined from the physical point of view, it is said that it is ‘a certain change of a body of such and such a kind’ (κίνησις τις τοῦ τοιοῦδὶ σώματος). Anger must involve a change of a person’s body which experiences the emotion; besides, that change does not take place in just any kind of body, but in a body *that is able* to experience a psychological state such as anger (‘of such and such a kind’; on this detail see Johansen (1997, pp. 16–17)).

This well-known characterization of πάθος provided in *de An.* intends to emphasize that the psychological states cannot be separated from the body in which they are realized (see 403a15–19).<sup>52</sup> The example of emotional states also constitutes a case of forms (in fact, they are λόγοι) that exist ‘materialized’, this pointing out that there is no anger, pleasure, or fear independently of a material substratum where they can be realized and so, one might contend, the psychological and the physical ingredients in any emotion are so interwoven that they constitute a sort of ‘inextricably psychophysical processes’.<sup>53</sup>

## 8.6 Some Physicalist Objections to Aristotle

At first sight, it seems that Aristotle is aware of the problems his ‘soul-body dualism’ involves<sup>54</sup>: (i) the soul is not a body, but it is in the body; (ii) if the soul is not a body, how can it be possible that the soul is *in* the body? Aristotle contends that the soul is what holds the body together (ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ σῶμα συνέχειν); the soul is a form, so it has the capacity to organize and determine in a distinctive way the matter. Otherwise, there would be no living being. (iii) But how can it be possible that when the soul ‘departs’, the body disintegrates and putrefies? (*de An.* 411b8–9).<sup>55</sup> (iii.i) Furthermore, one might object that unless Aristotle is speaking in a metaphorical way, these kinds of spatial categories cannot be applied to the soul, since the soul is not a body. That is, how is it possible that the soul ‘departs’ the body if the soul is not a body? If *x* departs *y*, it is because *x* was *in* *y*. (iv) The materialist could also argue that an Aristotelian soul cannot be contained by the body (i.e. the soul cannot be *in* the body) because the ‘containing-contained couple’ is only possible between

<sup>52</sup> In a similar (not identical) vein, Aristotle argues that the bronze circle has its matter in its λόγος (‘formal structure’); there are some forms that exist materialized only in some specific composites, such as snubness with respect to nose, since ‘snub’ is a predicate that can be applied only to a nose (*Metaph.* 1033a1–5). See also 1014b36–1015a7, 1030b16–20, 1037a29–33.

<sup>53</sup> As argued by Charles (2008, pp. 17–18), showing this way that Aristotle’s psychological model cannot be understood as a kind of dualism.

<sup>54</sup> As remarked above, it is a ‘dualism’ denied by those who state (like Morel (2007) and Charles (2008)) that the living being is a psychophysical unity, and that *any* form of dualism when applied to Aristotle is based on a Cartesian assumption that Aristotle would not share (see especially Charles). When I refer to Aristotle’s psychology in terms of ‘dualism’ I certainly take for granted that he considered the living being to be a psychophysical unity. But in so far as he took the soul and the body to be two disparate kinds of things, he endorses *a certain form* of dualism (on this point see Chap. 1). In addition, I endorse the view that form and matter are ‘incomplete’ entities which are able to be completed by each other in their union in the composite (see Lowe (2012, p. 230)).

<sup>55</sup> See also *PA* 641a17–19. Certainly, Aristotle both asserts that the soul ‘departs’ the body and that the νοῦς (the rational soul) ‘enters’ into the body ‘from outside’ (*GA* 736b27–29). Of course, this is a very intricate topic I cannot discuss here. For discussion see Bos (2003, pp. 159–161) and Berti (2008, pp. 296–311) (where the reception of Aristotle’s theory of νοῦς ‘coming from outside’ is dealt with).

bodies, but Aristotle holds that the soul is a form, so it cannot be a body. Indeed, he has no doubt that the soul (a form) is *in* the body. Aristotle and the Peripatetics would reply that the soul is not in the body in the same sense as a body is in another body, but like a form is in matter.<sup>56</sup> But Aristotle has no problem in acknowledging that, even though the substance of the soul is not a body, it is nonetheless ‘obvious’ that ‘the principle of nutritive soul’ does exist *in* ‘a certain part of the body’ (ἐν τινι τοῦ σώματος ὑπάρχει μορίῳ φανερόν), ‘one of those possessing control over the members’ (*Juv.* 467b14–16).<sup>57</sup>

Finally, one should grant that, to some extent, Aristotle accounts for the manner in which what is ‘common to soul and body’ *occurs*; at the beginning of the *De sensu* (436b1–8) he argues that (i) all the things mentioned as being ‘common to body and soul’ occur either accompanied by sensation,<sup>58</sup> or through sensation. (ii) Some are either affections or states of sensation, others are its safeguard or its preservation, while others are its destruction and privation. Memory is a safeguard and a preservation (φυλακὰ καὶ σωτηρία) of sensation since it is a sort of retention of something which was perceived. By contrast, forgetting must be a destruction or privation (of that of which one has had memory, for example). (iii) But the most important point is, as observed above, that perception occurs ‘*because of* the soul *through* the body’ (*Sens.* 436b6–7). If this is so, then without a doubt Aristotle holds that body and soul are co-dependent: without a bodily experience, there is no sensation. But without the soul, working as a ‘control center’, the bodily affections could not be organized. Thus Aristotle, in a clear Platonic vein, continues to believe that what rules is the soul, not the body. It is the soul that makes the body alive, but without a body there is no soul, because ‘soul’ is taken to be a set of ‘psychological functions’, functions that are only possible when the soul is embedded in a body. Hence it is not at all odd that Aristotle, drawing on Plato once again,<sup>59</sup> maintains that there are some things that are common to body and soul.

<sup>56</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias was sensitive to the physicalist objection; he explains that, even though the soul *is* in the animal’s body (Alexander, *De anima* 13, 10: αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ σώματι τοῦ ζώου), the soul can only be in the body in the way that a form is in matter (the ways in which a thing is said to be in another are listed by Aristotle in *Ph.* 210a14–24; he refers to the case of the form in the matter in the lines 20–21, but unfortunately he does not provide a detailed account of this point).

<sup>57</sup> When analyzing vision Aristotle gives an intriguing account regarding the *place where the soul is* (cf. *Sens.* 438b6–10): if outward vision is impossible without light, the same thing must happen in the case of inward vision. So there must be a transparent medium with the eye. And he adds that it is clear that the perceptive part of the soul is not at the external part of the eye, but it is ‘within’. If the soul is an immaterial entity, it cannot be located in any place of the body unless Aristotle means that the soul is ‘within’ in the sense of an inner perceptive capacity the animal is endowed with.

<sup>58</sup> Waking is a psychological activity that occurs ‘accompanied by sensation’ because it is the restoration of the senses to their activity (Aristotle (1995, p. 184)).

<sup>59</sup> See Pl. *Phlb.* 33d (discussed in Sect. 3 above). Taking into consideration what I have discussed above, it can be held that the Aristotelian treatment of sensation (as an affection common to soul and body) stems from the *Philebus*, where Plato presents a ‘moderate dualism’ (in comparison to what he argues in the *Phaedo*) and admits a close connection between body and soul.

Maybe, like some contemporary philosophers, both Plato and Aristotle, while posing a certain interactionist view, may have considered the ‘homogeneity thesis’<sup>60</sup> to be a too strong constraint to place on causation. But the fact that Aristotle abandons the interactionist stance shows that he could have been sensitive to the physicalist objection based on or derived from the homogeneity thesis.

## 8.7 Summary and Concluding Remarks

At the outset of this paper I have suggested that the commonality between soul and body is the fact that both of them are capacities.<sup>61</sup> To some extent, this explains why when the soul acts upon the body, the body is able to receive the soul’s action, and *vice versa* (at least in the ‘interactionist view’, considered both by Plato and Aristotle). After all, capacities can be regarded to be relational properties of objects; Plato seems to agree with this view when he states the relational feature of what is active and passive (*Tht.* 157a5–6). Indeed, if both the soul and the body are able to act and to be acted upon, both of them turn out to be very plastic notions that should not necessarily be understood as entirely foreign to each other. In Aristotle this is quite obvious; but, as it can be seen in the *Tht.* passage just quoted, it is not less clear in Plato.<sup>62</sup>

Now this commonality between soul and body does not explain how an immaterial entity sets the body in motion, or how a material entity is able to carry out a certain action on the soul. To be sure, Aristotle declares the soul to be ‘the cause and principle’ of the living being (*de An.* 415b13–14); given that ‘cause’ and ‘principle’ are said in many ways, he is compelled to clarify that the soul is cause (i) as a source of motion, (ii) as ‘that for the sake of which’, and (iii) as a substance (where ‘substance’ –οὐσία– must mean ‘form’) of living bodies.<sup>63</sup> The way in which the soul is

<sup>60</sup> The view that an event *e* involving a substance A can enter into causal relations with another event *e*<sup>1</sup> involving a substance B only if A and B are substances of the same kind; see Wong (2007, p. 172).

<sup>61</sup> For the senses in which such commonality can be taken (strongly or weakly) as a possible strategy to understand what is common to soul and body, see Shields (2016, pp. 95–98).

<sup>62</sup> See Gavray (2006, p. 40).

<sup>63</sup> Shields points out that Aristotle does not assert here ‘that the soul is the form of the living body, but says rather that it is its substance’ (2016, p. 203), but he immediately recognizes that Aristotle regularly identifies form as the substance of that whose being it provides. Of course, this is the case and is clear in many Aristotelian passages (including those cited by Shields). The interesting part of Shields’ commentary here is focused on the second premise of Aristotle’s argument (i.e. ‘living is being for living beings’), which can be regarded as a general assertion encompassing all the living beings. One can speak of the form ‘plant’, ‘dog’, or ‘man’, but these are ‘specific forms’, as it were, of specific living beings: ‘living’ or ‘being alive’ is the most general manner in which the fundamental form of a living being can be described. When commenting on these lines Berti interestingly suggests that life is an actuality in the *second* sense (i.e. not as the *first* actuality, which is potentiality; *de An.* 412a27), that is, ‘as the exercise of the constitutive capacity of the soul, that is to say, as activity’ (Berti, 2005, pp. 134–135).

cause as substance is clear: οὐσία understood as a form is the cause of being for all things (both artificial and natural); living is ‘being’ for living beings (i.e. what essentially characterizes a living being is ‘being alive’). It is also not difficult to understand how the soul is cause as ‘that for the sake of which’, the main argument being that all the natural bodies are instruments of the soul and so they are for the sake of it (emphasizing again the priority of the soul as the moving principle of body). Finally, the soul as an efficient cause means that it is the cause of quantitative and qualitative movements, but also of motion ‘in respect of place’ (κατὰ τόπον κίνησις; *de An.* 415b21–22). Further on (*de An.* 433a10–13, 31–b1) we learn that what sets the animal in motion is either the desire or the (practical) intellect (or rather ‘what is object of desire’ —ὁρεκτόν—, as Aristotle apparently corrects himself; 433a20). Given that both imagination and thought do not move without desire, they seem to depend on desire. But what is desirable is just the necessary condition of motion: without imagination and thought that ‘intend’ what is object of desire as being desirable, there is no motion.<sup>64</sup>

Sometimes we tend to think of efficient Aristotelian causes as bodily items and often this is the case (see *Ph.* 194b30–31 and *Metaph.* 1013a31 where the examples of the father —the ‘producer’— and the child —‘what is produced’— are furnished). But Aristotle also thinks of decision as a good example of moving cause (ὁ βουλευσας αἴτιος; *Ph.* 194b30, 195a22; *Metaph.* 1013a30–31). Thus, it is not at all odd that Aristotle takes desire and thought (immaterial items) to be efficient causes of motion. Moreover, he regards a capacity (δύναμις) as being a source of movement, which is (i) in another thing or (ii) in the same thing *qua* other. An example of (i) is the art of building (insofar as art is a certain kind of knowledge, it is a psychological item), a capacity that is not present in the thing built. A capacity in the sense (ii) is the art of healing (*Metaph.* 1019a15–18). The important point here is that capacities (immaterial things) are efficient causes, and that both kinds of capacities produce a change in another thing, this thing being a body. What Aristotle is arguing is that incorporeal entities (the art of building, the art of healing) are able to produce a change in a piece of matter (stones and bricks, a person, etc.) and that those pieces of matter are able to be acted upon by those entities.

But we learn from the first three chapters of *Physics* VII that Aristotle is concerned with showing that the physical movement entails the ‘move-being moved relation’, and in such relation the mover must be *in touch* with what is moved; that is, there is no physical movement without physical contact: what physically moves is at once moved physically (see *Ph.* 202a5–7, 243a32–33: ἅμα τῷ κινουμένῳ

<sup>64</sup> At the beginning of *de An.* III 10 Aristotle appears to be thinking mainly of human beings; but later in the chapter he states that ‘when imagination moves, it does not move without desire’ (433a20). Human beings have both imagination and thought (and thought presupposes imagination); irrational animals only have imagination, so this can be the manner in which Aristotle parallels the way in which humans ‘intend’ what is desirable with the way in which irrational animals do the same thing (i.e. exclusively through perception and imagination).



ἔστι).<sup>65</sup> Now if one considers these passages, one might wonder in what sense the *art* of building, which is an efficient cause and an immaterial thing, is ‘in touch’ with what is moved by it (i.e. stones, bricks). The two versions of the ‘treatise of the cause’ (those contained in the *Physics* and in the *Metaphysics*) assert that the producer can be both a corporeal and an incorporeal entity, so the causal relation can take place even though the mover and what is moved are not of the same nature and thereby not in *physical* contact.<sup>66</sup> Aristotle did not think that between what is immaterial and material there is an incommensurable gap, which turns impossible causal action of immaterial things upon the bodies. This will be the task of post-Aristotelian philosophers.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Of course, Aristotle thinks that the soul is not moved, unless accidentally. On the meaning of ἄμα in this line see Manuwald (1971, pp. 103, 108–109) and Wardy (1990, pp. 121–123).

<sup>66</sup> Maybe Aristotle might reply to this objection by arguing that the formal, final, and moving causes often coincide (*Ph.* 198a24–26; *Metaph.* 1070b 30–35). But a formal cause does not ‘move’, and ‘the primary source of motion is the same *in species*’ as the formal and the final cause (τῷ εἶδει τὸ τὸ τοῖς).

<sup>67</sup> Different versions of this paper were presented at Nagoya University, Japan (May 2015), at the colloquium ‘Soul and Mind in Ancient Thought’ (Alberto Hurtado University, Chile, October 2015), at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (January 2016), and at the Argentine Catholic University (Buenos Aires, June 2017). I am grateful to all these audiences for helpful criticism and remarks, and especially to Yasuhira Y. Kanayama and their colleagues in Nagoya for a challenging and stimulating discussion, and to Ivana Costa and her students in Buenos Aires for their questions. Special thanks are also due to Gabriela Rossi who was kind enough to read the second draft of this chapter. Her remarks were important to improve the general presentation of this paper. The research for this work was supported by Fondecyt Project 1150067 (Chile).



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# Chapter 9

## The Causal Structure of Emotions in Aristotle: Hylomorphism, Causal Interaction between Mind and Body, and Intentionality



Gabriela Rossi

**Abstract** Recently, a strong hylomorphic reading of Aristotelian emotions has been put forward, one that allegedly eliminates the problem of causal interaction between soul and body. Taking the presentation of emotions in *de An.* I 1 as a starting point and basic thread, but relying also on the discussion of *Rh.* II, I will argue that this reading only takes into account two of the four causes of emotions, and that, if all four of them are included into the picture, then a causal interaction of mind and body remains within Aristotelian emotions, independent of how strongly their hylomorphism is understood. Beyond the discussion with this recent reading, the analysis proposed of the fourfold causal structure of emotions is also intended as a hermeneutical starting point for a comprehensive analysis of particular emotions in Aristotle. Through the different causes Aristotle seems to account for many aspects of the complex phenomenon of emotion, including its physiological causes, its mental causes, and its intentional object.

### 9.1 Introduction

In Aristotle's writings, emotions are discussed within diverse epistemological frameworks, from ethics to philosophy of nature, including also –and most notably– rhetoric. However, Aristotle seems to rely each time on the assumption that we

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already share some idea of what an emotion is: a general definition of the emotion and a unified theory of emotions, which would serve as a keystone for every particular treatment of the problem, is conspicuously absent from the Aristotelian *corpus*.<sup>1</sup> Some attempts have been made to reconstruct such a theory, but they are allegedly partial, among other causes, because the set of psychophysical states of intentional nature that Aristotle calls ‘emotions’ is somewhat heterogeneous: some of them are defined as desires, some are not, some have clear ends, which others seem to have not, some involve a feeling of pleasure and/or pain, while in others this is not evident, some entail a belief or judgment while others appear to be based on imagination. It appears that different aspects of emotions are stressed by Aristotle in different texts (and sometimes even within one text) according to the aim that guides each treatment, and it often happens that some aspects that seem crucial to the emotion as presented in one context are (or seem to be) altogether absent in other places.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the first problem to undertake such a task as a study of Aristotle’s conception of emotions is to determine where to start, i.e. which of all the treatments of emotions to take as a basis for an approach to this issue.

From all the Aristotelian treatments of emotions, the most extensive and the most modulated is the one of *Rh.* II 1–11. It is probably for this reason that this text is usually taken as the primary source for the study of Aristotelian emotions. In it, Aristotle offers characterizations of at least fifteen different emotions. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that this detailed discussion answers to specific purposes which are, first, to provide the orator with some strategies to present herself as well disposed towards the audience,<sup>3</sup> and, second, to identify potentially useful discursive strategies for the orator in order to arouse (or dissolve) a certain emotion in her audience, with the final end of disposing their judgment towards the decision she wants to. Since the main point of the orator is to induce these emotional states in the audience through speech,<sup>4</sup> this discussion of emotions is especially rich in indications about the sort of beliefs and representations that a person has when he or she feels a certain emotion, so that the orator can eventually induce them. This treatment is of extraordinary interest and has been extensively celebrated within the literature on emotions, even out of Aristotelian scholarship, among other things, because it is taken as a robust development of a cognitivist theory of emotions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for instance Fortenbaugh 2002, p. 114; Cooper 1996, pp. 238–239; Striker 1996, p. 287; Rapp 2008, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Leighton 1996, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper 1996, pp. 239–240; Frede 1996, p. 265; cf. Arist. *Rh.* II 1, 1378a6–8 with 1378a18–19.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle makes clear then that the arousal of emotions he will discuss is the one produced by the orator *through speech* (διὰ τοῦ λόγου, *Rh.* I 2, 1356a1 or ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου, 1356a14), for this is precisely what distinguishes a technical from a non-technical rhetorical move (1355b35–39).

<sup>5</sup> R. Solomon, one of the prominent contemporary theorists on emotions, claims that in *Rh.* Aristotle ‘developed a strikingly modern theory of emotion that stands up to most contemporary criticism’ which he associates with modern cognitivist theories of emotions (Solomon 2003, p. 1; cf. also Goldie 2000, pp. 23–28, for a modern appraisal of Aristotle’s discussion of emotions in *Rh.* II). Solomon himself, being a cognitivist, finds an antecedent of his own position in the Aristotelian conception of emotions of *Rh.* Modern so-called cognitivist theories of emotion tend to ascribe a

While in *Rh.* II 1–11 the causal connection between beliefs or imagination and emotion is at the center of stage, in *Rh.* I 10–11 emotions are instead discussed as causes of actions, so here the privileged aspect of the emotion is its relation to desire (hence to pleasure),<sup>6</sup> which is only mentioned in the definition of anger in the discussion of *Rh.* II. This perspective coincides in part with *MA* 8 where Aristotle also mentions emotions (together with desire) as a cause of action.<sup>7</sup> This shift of focus is easily explained: within the context of forensic oratory, the mention of emotions as irrational causes of action in *Rh.* I 10 is aimed at providing the orator with potential explanations of a defendant's questionable actions (the ones that brought him or her to court, probably).

Neither of these rhetorical treatments of emotions has scientific or theoretical aspirations. They are destined to the orator's practical purposes. Of course, if they are to be of actual use, they must work with a concept of emotion which corresponds to how they *really* are; but this concept is never fully explained, even less defined in scientific terms. There is not in these chapters a proper theory of emotions. Something similar happens with several definitions or particular emotions scattered through the *Topics*, which are of informative value, but cannot be taken as the expression of a full-fledged theory.

From the theoretical point of view, in fact, the most relevant discussion of the phenomenon of emotions is found in *de An.* I 1. Nevertheless, this is not a theoretical study of emotions in their own right. The goal of Aristotle's discussion here is rather to elucidate the ontological structure of this psychophysical phenomenon, as a paradigmatic case of all (or most of) the affections of soul. Once again, no comprehensive definition or theory of emotions is provided, and the extension of the treatment is this time rather meager. However, this is the most holistic (even if not the most detailed and modulated) of Aristotle's treatments of emotions.

For this reason, I have decided to take the presentation of emotions in *de An.* I 1 as the basic thread of my contribution. From this text I do not intend to provide a

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prominent role to beliefs in emotions; to this extent, they stand against Jamesian theories, that understand the emotion as the perception of a physiological disturbance, this physiological factor having causal and essential priority in the emotion. There is also, however, some debate among Aristotelian scholars about the cognitive nature of the emotions in Aristotle, but I am afraid that in this debate the term 'cognitivist' is used in a slightly different way than in the above mentioned debates, namely it refers to the view that an intellectual, intelligent or rational element is essential to the Aristotelian emotions. This view which sometimes is also called 'doxastic reading' is not necessarily opposed to some form of Jamesianism but to the tenet that the emotions are essentially irrational for Aristotle. For a defense of a strong cognitivist (or doxastic) reading of Aristotelian emotions see especially Fortenbaugh 2002; a different view is held by Cooper 1996, based mostly on the treatment of *Rh.* I 10, and more recently J. Moss 2012 argues extensively for the reading that emotions are not functions of the intellect but are essentially non-rational. Outside Aristotelian scholarship, a robust position against the over-intellectualization of emotions in the contemporary debate is maintained by Goldie 2000.

<sup>6</sup>A probable reason that appetite (ἐπιθυμία) is present within the list of emotions in *Rh.* I 10; cf. *infra* note 16.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *MA* 8, 702a3–19. For a good discussion of chapters *Rh.* I 10–13 and the role of emotions in the Aristotelian theory of action and in the forensic context, see Viano 2010.

reconstruction of an Aristotelian theory of emotions, but merely to put forward an analysis of what I take to be the theoretical starting point for a comprehensive analysis of particular emotions; this is the causal structure of emotions. The importance of clarifying this structure has been pointed at in the literature, and attempts have been made in this direction.<sup>8</sup> My aim concerning this issue is, first, to contribute to this debate and to clarify some points that have not yet been sufficiently discussed, and, second, to discuss a recent reading about the hylomorphic structure of emotions and its consequence for the problem of the causal interaction between mind and body. I do not assume that every emotion has each one of the four causes I will analyze, and I acknowledge that in each context of discussion some causal aspect of the emotion is stressed over others; but I do assume that the different treatments of emotions in the *Corpus* are coherent and complementary. Hence, in my analysis of *de An* I 1 I will take into account and refer freely to the treatments of *Rh.* and to other works as well.<sup>9</sup>

In the following pages I will begin discussing the context and ultimate purpose of the presentation of the emotions in *de An.* I 1, then I will present a recent ‘Post-Cartesian’ reading of the structure of emotions which emerges mainly from these passages of *de An.* This reading proposes, in short, to eliminate the problem of the causal interaction between body and soul in Aristotle by resorting to a strong hylomorphism that accounts for the structure of emotions (among other psychophysical phenomena). This will be followed by an analysis of the fourfold causal structure of emotions that also emerges from *de An.* I 1 and that will be the occasion for discussing the implications that the defenders of the ‘Post-Cartesian’ interpretation assume for their reading; namely, I will contend that this reading does not really solve the problem of the causal interaction of body and soul. Relying on the analysis of the fourfold causal structure of emotions I will suggest some ideas to demarcate the place where the problem of the causal interaction of body and soul remains in spite of a strong hylomorphism.

<sup>8</sup>Most notably by Fortenbaugh 2002, pp. 12–18, with whose discussion I am much indebted, and now also by Rapp 2008, pp. 52 ff. See *infra* Sect. 9.4.

<sup>9</sup>Aristotle also sees emotions as playing a relevant part in excellence of character, which is characterized precisely as lying in a mean relative to us concerning actions and emotions. In other words, it is the acquired disposition of doing and feeling what is right or appropriate in the particular circumstance of action. In the ethical writings there is not a systematic and unitary treatment of emotions comparable to the one in *Rh.*, however. From the point of view of practical reason, emotions are also a point of intersection between the rational and the irrational: according to *EN* I 13, they belong to the irrational part of the soul, which can ‘listen’ to reason. What does Aristotle exactly mean by this figure is not clear: according to more intellectualist readings, the image means that the irrational part is (or can be) open to reasoned persuasion or admonition apparently each time it feels an emotion (cf. Fortenbaugh 2002, pp. 29–32); other readings focus on the way the rational part ‘shapes’ the irrational part through early education (cf. esp. Sherman 1989, pp. 162–164, 171–174, cf. 27, 31; cf. Moss 2012, pp. 168–169). I will not deal here with this problem: the place of emotions in relation to excellence and their relation to practical reason falls out of the scope of this article. For a good discussion of this issue, see esp. Sherman 1989, pp. 44–50, 165–174; and the lucid observations of Striker 1996, pp. 293–299 and Nussbaum 1996.



## 9.2 *De Anima* I 1

In the introductory chapter of *de An.*, Aristotle leaves clear from the beginning that the study of the soul falls under the philosophy of nature,<sup>10</sup> i.e. Aristotle will study the soul here as a physicist, ‘for the soul is in some sense the principle of living beings’<sup>11</sup> (402a6–7).

In this context, immediately previous to the discussion of emotions, Aristotle makes some specific methodological observations that shed light on the ultimate purpose of analyzing emotions. He claims that it is not only useful to know the definition or ‘τί ἐστι’ in order to demonstrate from it the accidents<sup>12</sup> of a substance (as in mathematics), but it is also useful to grasp the essential accidents of a substance, for this contributes in turn to the knowledge of the ‘τί ἐστι’ (402b16–25). The correct definition of a substance should be one that accounts for those accidents as they appear to us, i.e. it should be one from which these accidents can be demonstrated. Hence, knowing the essential accidents of a substance *x* gives us an *explanandum*—or, in more Aristotelian terms, the φαινόμενα— that any tentative definition of *x* should be able to account for. The definitions that lose sight of the φαινόμενα and ‘fail to facilitate even a conjecture about them’ are obviously ‘dialectical and futile’.<sup>13</sup> We can assume that, in this treatise, Aristotle intends to reach a definition of the soul that does not suffer from this problem.

Aristotle introduces then the discussion about emotions in 403a2-b19, and it is reasonable to think that he is putting into practice the methodological indication he has just given: he will try to obtain some knowledge, even conjectural, about what he wants to define (the soul) proceeding from some of the φαινόμενα that seem to be its essential accidents, namely: its affections (πάθη). Thus, the ultimate purpose of the discussion carried out in 403a2-b19 is (a) to state at least a certain sort of psychical phenomenon that the definition he is searching for should be able to explain, and (b) to start to conjecture, with it, about what is soul. If the affections of soul are inseparable from a certain matter, there would be reasons to suppose that the definition of soul should be able to account for this (i.e. that soul itself should be inseparable from a certain matter).

I will divide the passage 403a2-b19 in four main sections.

<sup>10</sup>This is a theoretical *episteme*; for a discussion about the possibility of a full-fledged science of soul, see R. Polansky 2007, pp. 34–5.

<sup>11</sup>All English translations of Aristotle’s texts are based on the *ROT* edited by J. Barnes, with minor modifications.

<sup>12</sup>This is the kind of accidents that belong per se to a substance—for this reason Aristotle calls them ‘essential’ (καθ’ αὐτό)—, like ‘having the interior angles equal to a right angle’ belongs to the triangle. These accidents can be demonstrated from the definition of the substance; cf. *APo.* I 10, 76b12–22; *Metaph.* V 30, 1025a30–35.

<sup>13</sup>δῆλον ὅτι διαλεκτικῶς εἴρηται καὶ κενῶς ἅπαντες (403a2). The use of διαλεκτικῶς and λογικῶς (both expressions can be synonymous, cf. Bonitz 1961, 432a9) in a negative sense in methodological passages is common in Aristotle; cf. *GC* I 2, 316a8–13, I 8, 325a13; *EE* I 8, 1217b21; *GA* II 8, 747b28–30, and esp. 748a13–14.

**I) 403a2–16:** the difficulty is raised about whether the affections of soul (πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς) in general are peculiar to the soul or belong to the complex of soul and body (403a3–10). Being the affections essential accidents or properties of the soul, the upshot of this discussion concerns the separability of the soul itself (403a10–16).

**II.1) 403a16–28:** Aristotle analyses emotions as a particular sort of affection of soul that works as a paradigmatic case in order to answer the difficulty raised in (I). These lines conclude that emotions are a composite of matter and form, and hence that their study belongs to the philosophy of nature.

**II.2) 403a29–b16:** Aristotle considers which sort of definition of emotions should the philosopher of nature provide.

**III) 403b16–19:** In the final lines of the chapter Aristotle goes back to the initial difficulty about the affections of soul and draws the final conclusion –based on the discussion about emotions– that they are inseparable from matter in a strong sense: they cannot be separated from the living being’s body neither in existence nor in thought (i.e. they cannot even be defined without reference to the body).

In (I) emotions appear as a kind of affection of soul among others. The examples given by Aristotle include anger, courage, appetite, and sense perception in general.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the term πάθος designates any affection of soul, including sense perception<sup>15</sup> and irrational desires, and not merely a subset of these affections corresponding to what we specifically call ‘emotions’.<sup>16</sup> However, after considering the implications of this difficulty for the issue of the separability of the soul, Aristotle reintroduces the consideration of the affections of soul, this time claiming that it seems that *all* of them (403a16) involve a body, but focusing solely on examples of emotions (anger and fear). I quote the passage **II.1**) in full:

‘(i) It seems that all the affections of soul involve a body—wrath, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, and also loving and hating; in all these there is a simultaneous affection of the

<sup>14</sup> ὀργίζεσθαι, θάρρειν, ἐπιθυμεῖν, ὄλως αἰσθάνεσθαι (403a7). Polansky 2007, p. 50, claims that the affections mentioned here are actually operations (ἔργα) of the soul. All these have in common, also, that they are temporary and not permanent; this is what distinguishes affections from other sorts of qualities according to *Cat.* 9b28–35, 10a6–10.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. also *Cat.* 9b5–9.

<sup>16</sup> The case of appetite (ἐπιθυμία) in particular is controversial. Appetite is sometimes mentioned by Aristotle within lists of emotions (cf. for instance *EN* 1105b21–23, *MA* 8, 702a2–4) as one of them. Moreover, in *Rh.* I 10 ἐπιθυμία and θυμός are mentioned as irrational desires (1369a4) and, as causes of actions, both seem to fall under the class of emotions (as opposed to reasoning) in 1369a17–18. (On the θυμός here see Cooper 1996, p. 238 and 249.) The ἐπιθυμία is also mentioned in passing in *Rh.* II 1, 1378a3, as one of the factors that can influence judgment, and again in II 12, 1388b32–33 as one of the emotions, alongside anger. One could conjecture that the reason that ἐπιθυμία and its intentional object (real or apparent pleasure) are discussed within the treatment of *Rh.* I 10–11 is that this affection seems suitable to explain why someone performs an action. However, the question remains why, if it is also a factor that affects judgment, ἐπιθυμία is not discussed in the chapters *Rh.* II 2–11, together with other emotions. However this may be, the debate about the status of ἐπιθυμία in relation to πάθη is one of the battlefields of the discussion between cognitivists (or doxastic) and non-intellectualist readings or Aristotelian emotions.

body. (ii) In support of this we may point to the fact that, while sometimes when violent and striking [mental] stimulations<sup>17</sup> occur there is no excitement or fear felt (μηδὲν παροξύνεσθαι ἢ φοβεῖσθαι), on others faint and feeble stimulations move us to these emotions (ὕπὸ μικρῶν καὶ ἀμαυρῶν κινεῖσθαι), namely when the body is already in a state of tension resembling its condition when we are angry. (ii') Here is a still clearer case: in the absence of any external cause of fear we find ourselves experiencing the feelings of a man in fear (ἐν τοῖς πάθεσι γίνονται τοῖς τοῦ φοβουμένου). From all this it is obvious that the affections of soul are enmattered reasons (λόγοι ἔνυλοι).<sup>18</sup> (iii) Consequently their definitions ought to correspond, e.g. anger should be defined as (a) a certain mode of movement of such and such a body (or part or faculty of a body) by (b) this or that cause and (c) for this or that end. (iv) That is precisely why the study of the soul—either every soul or souls of this sort—is a task proper to the philosopher of nature.' (403a16–28).

Emotions are thus taken in as a paradigmatic case of how an affection of soul happens only when the body undergoes at the same time certain changes. The reason is probably that, in emotions, it appears with special clarity what Aristotle apparently wants to show for every affection: that they are affections (πάθη) of the composite.<sup>19</sup>

In (ii) and (ii') Aristotle describes two phenomena that reveal the crucial role that the body plays in emotions. The two cases described in (ii) are aimed to underscore that the sole mental affection, even when it is very strong (say, when we see something very frightening), is *not a sufficient cause* of an emotion. What Aristotle supposes here, and does not say, is that what is missing in these cases is the corresponding alteration of the body, and this is why we do not really feel fear or excitement although we are in the presence of something very frightening. The same happens when the body is unable to reach a certain temperature, which is needed to have the

<sup>17</sup> παθημάτων in 403a20 must allude to the mental aspect of the emotion, for Aristotle claims immediately that excitement or fear (i.e. the full-fledged emotion) do not happen.

<sup>18</sup> 'Reason' is one of the (many) possible meanings of λόγος, and it seems to me that it fits well with the general drift of the passage: the idea is that emotions involve mental states that are due to some cognitive representation (more on this below), and that cannot happen without a body or matter. Another possible translation is 'form', understood as the ontological component of the emotion that corresponds to the soul, and surely Aristotle has this sense in mind also, for in the next lines he goes on to argue that the definition of any emotion should include its form as well as its matter.

<sup>19</sup> In the same line, see Chap. 8, Sect. 8.5, for a detailed analysis of the emotions as particularly clear examples of Aristotle's 'co-dependence of soul and body view'. It is true that in some emotions the physical experience is more distinct than in others. The physical sensations of joy or pity, for instance, seem to be more diffusing than those of fear or anger. However, in general, the bodily alterations that occur when one feels an emotion are a matter of common self-awareness. The paradigmatic value of emotions in *de An.* is also not without problems; there is a debate in the literature among spiritualists and literalists about the extent to which these can indeed be taken as a paradigm for every affection of soul, and particularly to sense-perception. While literalists tend to take Aristotle's claims in *de An.* I 1 seriously and hence consider the physiological component as an essential necessary condition of sense-perception, the spiritualists (notably M. Burnyeat) deny that sense-perception involves essentially a bodily or physiological component, and hence deny the extension of the casual scheme of emotions to every affection of soul; for a good treatment of this debate, see Boeri 2010, pp. cxxxvii–cxlvii.

corresponding emotion.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that the bodily or material aspect of the emotion is a *necessary condition* for it to happen.<sup>21</sup> In the second example, in turn, when the body is already in a state close to what its condition is when we are afraid or angry, a feeble stimulation can trigger the emotion in question.<sup>22</sup>

The fact that emotions are also affections of the body is particularly clear, says Aristotle, from (ii') the fact that we come to have the same affection *than* someone who's scared, even when there is nothing to fear. The reason that we can claim we have the same affection *than*—or are in the same state *than*—someone who's scared, but *without being scared*—given that there is no object perceived as frightening—is a certain state of our body. Here, just like in the previous example, we do not feel the full-fledged emotion, only that in this case the element missing is not the bodily one, but the mental one. The examples (ii) and (ii'), thus, show a little more than Aristotle initially announces: they not only make clear that emotions have a necessary bodily component, but they also show that a certain mental representation or intentional content (of something as frightening, for example), is another necessary condition for there to be a full-fledged emotion.

It is not a surprise, then, that Aristotle concludes this analysis introducing the celebrated formula that emotions are 'enmattered reasons' (λόγοι ἐνυλοὶ) as something evident (δῆλον). Hence, their definition should include both matter and reason (or form). Before analyzing the definition offered in (iii), let me make one minor comment about the further conclusion that Aristotle draws from the passage: that 'the study of the soul—either every soul or souls of this sort—is a task proper to the philosopher of nature.'

That the philosopher of nature must study the soul is also especially stressed in *PA I 1*, esp. 641a17–641a32.<sup>23</sup> However, the point of *PA I 1* and of *de An. I 1* seem to be different. In *PA I 1* Aristotle is discussing against the materialist approach for the explanation of the parts of animals, and the point of the assertion about the soul as the main object of study of the physics is to stress the fact—against materialism—that matter is not its main object. In other words, that there must be a priority of form over matter in natural explanations. In *de An. I 1* the drift of the passage seems

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<sup>20</sup> This condition is not met when the body has the opposite temperature to that required by the emotion, either by the influence of another emotion or due to an illness, age, etc. For this reason Aristotle claims in *Rh. II 13*, 1389b29–32, that old people are more prone to feel fear than young people (the old men's body is usually cold because of their age, as fear requires it to be; while young people are normally warmer). References to the bodily temperature that belongs with different emotions are also in *EN 1149a30* (the θυμός has a hot nature), *PA 650b27–30* (animals with watery blood are cooler and hence more prone to feel fear), *Resp. 479b19–26* (fear is associated with a cooling of the heart). There is also an interesting suggestion in *EN 1178a14–16* that some excellences of character are also due to the body, and cf. also 1178a19–21, quoted below in section 4 (b).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 403b1–3.

<sup>22</sup> From this passage it already emerges that what *triggers* the emotion, including the movement of the body involved in it, is in the last term a mental or representational stimulation (more on this below).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also *Metaph. Z 11*, 1037a16–17.

to be quite the opposite: the initial question is not whether matter can explain psychic events, but whether the affections of the soul involve a body or not, and to what extent they do. And the burden is clearly on the side of the affirmative answer. This explains the methodological passage that precedes the discussion about emotions and affections in general, and the suggestion that any definition of the soul that leaves these affections without an explanation (i.e. that does not take into account the peculiar relation of the soul with a body of a certain kind) is ‘futile and dialectical’.<sup>24</sup> This is why the claim that the soul is an object of study of the philosopher of nature, and the remarks about the sort of definition appropriate to this object, emphasize its non-separability from a body, and they should be likely read in the light of some passages of *Ph.* II 2 where he discusses the formal object of the philosophy of nature in contrast with mathematics.<sup>25</sup> I will comment on this briefly for it is especially relevant for the reading presented in section 3.

One of the main tasks of *Ph.* II 2 is to argue that the philosopher of nature should not study the form of natural beings separated from movement –i.e. from matter– as those who postulate the Ideas believe (cf. 193b35–194b1; 194a5–7).<sup>26</sup> This does not mean merely that these forms cannot exist but in some matter (the same happens with mathematical objects such as lines or spheres), but it should be understood in the strong sense that the forms that the philosopher of nature studies cannot even be conceived of without their matter. Hence the definition of these forms cannot omit to mention their matter. According to *Metaph.* Z 11 this is precisely the difference between composite entities like a bronze circle, and a man. While bronze is accidental to being a circle, and hence the circle can be defined without mentioning the matter in which it necessarily exists, ‘an animal is something perceptible, and *it is not possible to define it* without reference to movement—nor, therefore, *without reference to the parts and to their being in a certain state*’ (*Metaph.* Z 11, 1036b28–30, cf. 1036b3–4).

That this is precisely the way in which Aristotle proposes to understand the relation between soul (form) and body (matter) in emotions and in affections in general, finds confirmation in the final lines of *de An.* I 1: ‘the affections of soul, insofar as they are such as passion and fear, are inseparable from the natural matter of animals in this way *and not in the same way as a line or surface.*’ (403b16–19). For this reason, Aristotle claims in (iii) that the definition of emotions that the philosopher of nature should give must include their formal aspect as well as their material aspect. Before discussing with some detail part (iii), I will present an interesting recent reading, that I will discuss in the remainder of this article.

<sup>24</sup> This seems to be precisely the methodological error former thinkers made when studying the relationship between soul and body, according to Aristotle (cf. *de An.* I 3, 407b12–25).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Charles 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Natural things are not what they are because of being in accordance with their matter (κατὰ τὴν ὕλην), but that does not mean that they can be what they are without that particular matter (οὐτ’ ἄνευ ὕλης) (194a14–15); cf. 194b12–13, *Metaph.* E 1, 1026a6, and also the parallel expression about matter as hypothetical necessity in *Ph.* II 9, 200a 5–6, 8–10.

### 9.3 A Reading against ‘Post-Cartesian’ Readings

Recently, a radical interpretation has been proposed by Ch. Rapp<sup>27</sup> and D. Charles<sup>28</sup> about the Aristotelian conception of emotions and its consequences for the problem of the causal interaction of body and soul in Aristotle. These authors argue against the ‘two component’ readings of Aristotelian emotions. The distinctive feature of the two component reading is that it considers that the emotion is a combination of a *purely* psychical component (that is mentioned in what Aristotle calls the dialectical definition of the emotion) and a *purely* physical component (that is mentioned in the physical definition). Against this tenet, Charles claims that being angry and being afraid are ‘common to body and soul’ in a particularly demanding way: ‘The relevant processes are inseparable in definition into two separate components. There is not one (definitionally) separable purely formal process to which can be added another definitionally distinct physical (or bodily) process, both making (definitionally) separable but individually necessary contributions to the outcome.’<sup>29</sup>

In the same vein, Rapp points out that if one takes into account the component expressed in the ‘formal’ part of the definition, then the emotion is caused by a perception or by a φαντασία, and both of them are themselves psychophysical phenomena for Aristotle, and not *purely* mental or psychical phenomena.<sup>30</sup> D. Charles argues similarly that the ‘dialectical’ definition of the emotion, that expresses its form, states that the emotion is a desire (ὄρεξις) (in the example: of revenge), but desire is itself also an inextricably psychophysical phenomenon,<sup>31</sup> for desire is not merely the mental act of intending an object as an end, but it is also the heat that happens in the body *with* it.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, concerning the *purely* physical component, both Rapp and Charles deny its pure nature pointing out that the boiling of the blood around the heart is itself described in teleological terms, and that the fact that it has *that* end is what makes *that* movement of the blood a determinate emotion and not any other.<sup>33</sup> In sum, *both* components of emotions are already psychophysical processes, *both* involve soul and body.

There is a further, relevant conclusion that these authors draw from this reading of Aristotle’s conception of emotions and affections of soul in general, namely that

<sup>27</sup> Rapp 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Charles 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Charles 2011, p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Rapp 2006, p. 205, and Charles 2011, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Charles 2011, pp. 82 ff.. It should be noted, though, that not all the emotions are defined (or easily understood) as desires. Actually, the only emotion explicitly defined in *Rh.* as a desire (ὄρεξις) is anger; cf. also *Top.* VIII 1, 156a31 (ὁ ὀργιζόμενος ὀρέγεται τιμωρίας) and 32 (ἡ ὀργὴ ὄρεξις εἶναι τιμωρίας).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *MA* 8, 701a33ff.

<sup>33</sup> ‘[W]hat happens in the ensouled body when the blood starts to boil is not due to the laws of elementary change, but rather something that only happens in a specific body formed by a specific sort of soul’ (Rapp 2006, p. 205). Cf. Charles 2011, p. 79.

it eliminates the problem of the causal interaction between soul and body, which affects what they call ‘post-Cartesian’ readings.<sup>34</sup> The reason is that Aristotle does not divide these phenomena into two pure separate components. Hence, there is no need to relate these components through causal interaction. ‘The idea of such an interaction between body and soul does not occur until we think of the soul as a more or less separate entity...’<sup>35</sup>

This interpretation is certainly appealing. However, I am not sure that it solves the problem it claims to solve. To start with, at first sight it seems that the problem of the causal interaction between body and form/soul is transferred to each of the psychophysical components of the emotion.<sup>36</sup> But I will focus on other issues that seem to have been overlooked by this reading, and which concern the fourfold causal structure of emotions. This will allow me to circumscribe the diverse aspects of the problem of the causal interaction between mind and body in the emotions in Aristotle. Besides that, an analysis of the Aristotelian causal approach to the emotions may have worth in itself as a promising model to tackle some issues that concern the causal and intentional aspect of emotions.

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<sup>34</sup>As D. Charles defines them, post-Cartesian readings hold the two component reading, i.e. they understand that there is a *purely* mental item and a *purely* corporeal item which interact. Among the ‘familiar options’ of post-Cartesian philosophy Charles counts dualism, materialism, functionalism and spiritualism (cf. Charles 2011, p. 76). Aristotle’s position would be a radical alternative to all these, according to this author. A contemporary version of this sort of reading in experimental psychology is the theory of emotions of Schachter-Singer, which sometimes is actually called the ‘two factor’ or ‘two component’ theory of emotion.

<sup>35</sup>Rapp 2006, p. 207. This author claims, moreover, that this is an intentional move on Aristotle’s part: ‘Since Aristotle ... pleads ... for the model of emotions as psycho-physical units it seems safe to conclude that he deliberately avoids a setting which allows of causal interaction between body and soul.’ (207). A lucid analysis showing that Aristotle in fact perceived this causal interaction as a problem can be found in Chap. 8 in this volume.

<sup>36</sup>A necessary condition for this reading to hold is that the components of the emotion have themselves no purely physical and mental components; against this last tenet see the critical arguments of Caston 2008, pp. 30–49. Charles 2011, pp. 87–89, has an argument to defend himself against this objection, for he pleads that the connate *pneuma* (which extracts and expands thanks to the heat / cold that accompanies desire, thus causing bodily movements, cf. *MA* 10, 703a9–24) is also itself an inextricably psychophysical phenomenon and its movements cannot be defined without reference to its goals. I’m not sure that Charles argument works, for it seems to put on the same level psychophysical phenomena involving mental events as formal causes (such as desire), and psychophysical phenomena which do not involve a mental event as its formal cause (such as the movements of *pneuma* in the processes of nutrition and reproduction). This becomes more problematic, I think, if one remembers that Aristotle’s explanation of the matter’s movements in general (and not only of organic matter) is not mechanistic but rather qualitative, so that a teleological dimension of a movement is not a warrant of the presence of soul (much less of mind).



## 9.4 The Causal Structure of Emotions

In this section I will analyze the causal structure of Aristotelian emotions, following the Aristotelian theory that there are four kinds of cause, each of which consists in a different (and irreducible) relation of causal dependence.<sup>37</sup> Beyond the discussion with this recent reading, the schematic analysis proposed of the fourfold causal structure of emotions is also intended as a hermeneutical starting point for a comprehensive analysis of particular emotions in Aristotle. The idea of an organized concurrence of several kinds of causes as necessary—but not separately sufficient—conditions of emotions seems indeed a promising way of approaching this complex phenomenon, and accounting for its diverse aspects.

In *de An.* I 1 we already find an indication of the fourfold causal structure of emotions. Throughout this text form and matter of the emotion are explicitly discussed, and in Aristotle's exemplary scheme of how the definition of an emotion should be in 403a25–27, the four causes are already alluded to. I reproduce the text again:

Consequently their definitions ought to correspond, e.g. anger should be defined as (a) a certain mode of movement (κίνησις τις) of such and such a body (or part or faculty of a body) (b) by this or that cause and (ὕπο τοῦδε) (c) for this or that end (ἐνεκα τοῦδε).

(a) Matter and form as causes.

In part (a) of the exemplary definition both matter and form are implied. The emotion is not merely the movement of any matter, but the movement of a *certain* body: an *animated* or *ensouled* body. Hence both matter and form are the simultaneous causes of this movement.<sup>38</sup> Soul and body are both affected when an emotion happens, and to feel an emotion is to be affected as an animated or ensouled body. In this sense, the movement that is the emotion is a psychophysical phenomenon, without any of the two items (matter or form) *causing* the other in an efficient sense. In similar cases, in fact, Aristotle sometimes refers to these causes as 'elements',<sup>39</sup> for they are immanent to the item in question.

This is also coherent with the general characterization of emotions in *Rh.* II 1:

'Emotions are those states through which people, being altered, turn about their judgments; and these states are accompanied by pain and pleasure (οἷς ἔπεται λύπη καὶ ἡδονή). For instance: rage, compassion, fear and all the like, and their contraries.' (1378a19–22).

<sup>37</sup> The discussion in Fortenbaugh 2002 is an important antecedent of this sort of reconstruction. This author emphasizes the role of beliefs and opinions as the efficient cause of the emotion based on passages of *Top.*, *Apo* and of course *Rh.* II, along the formal and material causes presented in *de An.* I. After his seminal work, there has been much debate about whether it is opinion or φαντασία that have this role. I will refer to this debate below. Rapp 2008, p. 52, also acknowledges that the causal structure of emotions should be analyzed from the Aristotelian perspective of the four causes, but his subsequent analysis is restricted to only to two of them: form and matter.

<sup>38</sup> For a different reading, see Rapp 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ph.* I 1; I 6, 189b 16, 27–29; *Metaph.* XII 4 *passim*.

People are altered or undergo a change (μεταβάλλοντες) when an emotion happens.<sup>40</sup> Thus, emotions seem to be described in general terms as a change or alteration (a sort of movement) of the composite (i.e. person) that feels the emotion. And the occurrence of this change is what makes them turn about their judgments.<sup>41</sup> Being an alteration of the composite is certainly a feature common to other affections of soul, as perception (at least, according to *de An.* I 1). What seems to be specific about emotions is that they are always accompanied by some sort of pleasure and/or pain.<sup>42</sup> This is in coincidence with the general characterization of emotions in *EN* II 1105b21–23: ‘by emotions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain (οἷς ἔπεται ἡδονὴ ἢ λύπη)’.<sup>43</sup>

Aristotle understands that there is a priority of the form over matter as a cause, and this is expressed notably in the concept of hypothetical necessity.<sup>44</sup> But this priority of form over matter, at least within one natural living being, does not happen necessarily in the manner of efficient causation, and does not involve temporal precedence. These causes are usually simultaneous. Both matter and form happen at the same time in a living being and act as reciprocal causes, one as potency and condition of possibility, the other as first actuality. I suggest that we should understand under this model what happens in emotions with form and matter as causes.

From the example given by Aristotle in *de An.* I 1 of what he considers to be a definition that takes into account only the form of the emotion (a definition that he calls ‘dialectical’), we can infer which is the cause-form of the emotion, at least in the case of anger: the dialectician ‘would define e.g. anger as the appetite (ὄρεξις) for returning pain for pain, or something like that’ (403a30–31). Thus the form of the emotion, desire, is this special sort of κίνησις of the body, and it involves necessarily an intentional object. Hence, the form-cause of anger is a certain desire, appetite or longing *for x*. Following the example, *x* can be formulated as a proposition

<sup>40</sup>This is essentially the same claim Aristotle makes in *de An.* I 4, 408a34–408b18: it is the man who experiences these things (being bold or fearful, being angry, etc.).

<sup>41</sup>Probably for this reason, Aristotle claims that arousing emotions in the audience is especially useful in forensic oratory, i.e. when the orator tries to influence judges when he defends or charges somebody with a crime (*Rh.* II 1, 1377b29–1378a5; cf. I 2, 1356a15–16; 1354b3–11). Due probably to the physical alteration they involve, they also have a distorting effect on sense-perception, cf. *Insomn.* 460b3–11 (for a good discussion of this passage see Leighon 1996).

<sup>42</sup>This is not as easy to detect in every emotion described by Aristotle; the clearest counterexample is hatred (cf. *Rh.* 1382a11–13). There has been some debate about whether pleasure and pain are the genus of emotions (as it happens in Plato’s *Phlb.*) or not; D. Frede 1996 has argued for this reading which is also endorsed by Cooper 1996, but the majority of interpreters nowadays are inclined to think that Aristotle abandoned the Platonic position on this point, even when pain and pleasure are important components of emotions (cf. for instance Dow 2011, Moss 2012, Rapp 2013).

<sup>43</sup>Cf. *EN* II 1104b14–15.

<sup>44</sup>This sort of priority is not usually expressed as the form ὑπὸ τοῦδε matter happens, for this reason I understand that form is not in part (b) of the definition, but is together with matter in (a).

(this is even clearer from the discussion of *Rh.* II). It is important to underline that the form-cause is not *x* but the desire for (or the aversion against) *x*.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, we have the matter-cause which is stated in the definition that Aristotle ascribes to a physicist in *de An.*: ‘a boiling of the blood or warm substance surrounding the heart’ (403a31-b1). This material aspect of the emotion does not happen as a *consequence* of the longing or desire, but is part of what it is to desire. As it is part of weaving to move your hand.<sup>46</sup> The relation between both definitions and the elements identified in each is spelled out as follows: ‘The one assigns the *material conditions*, the other the form or account; for what he states is the account of the fact, though *for its actual existence there must be embodiment of it in a material such as is described by the other*’ (403b1–3). It is clear, then, that matter and form are simultaneous causes of the emotion as different constituents of the phenomenon.

Now, as it is clear, the readings of Rapp and D. Charles are focused on these two causes. When these authors claim that emotions are a psychophysical phenomenon they are considering the inextricable relation between matter and form as its constituents. However, the problematic point for the causal interaction of soul—or more precisely, mind—and body emerges in a more pressing way with the other forms of causality involved, which also appear in the exemplary definition of anger in *de An.* I 1, and for which I am not sure that their reading provides an answer.

(b) What initiates movement or the efficient cause of emotion.

In (b) Aristotle refers to the cause due to which (ὕπὸ τοῦδε) the movement in (a) occurs. This is the principle of movement or efficient cause of the emotion, what motivates or triggers the emotion.

There are clues of this sort of moving cause in at least two other passages in which Aristotle is discussing the four causes: *Ph.* II 7 198a19–20, and *APo* II 11, 94a36–b5. The example is the same in both cases. In it, Aristotle explains that the Persians went to war against Athens due to a previous Athenian attack on Sardis, which (Aristotle does not say but presumably) was taken as an offense or wrongdoing by the Persians. What is remarkable about this sort of efficient cause is that we would describe it as a *reason*. It is an efficient cause of a war, because it provoked it, and it provoked it because the relevant agent of the movement *perceived* that fact and *judged* it in a determinate way (e.g. as a wrongdoing), and reacted to it accordingly. Being this reaction (probably the desire of revenge or retaliation) the proxi-

<sup>45</sup> Anger is defined as a desire in *Rh.*, in *de An.*, and also in *Top.* VIII 1, 156a32–33. Of course, this is not the only case: in *Rh.* I 10, emotions are closely linked to irrational desires, such as appetite (for the discussion about ἐπιθυμία see *supra* note 16), and the reason is probably that emotions are considered in this chapter as probable causes of actions. This accent on their motivational role accounts for their being treated as desires, for desire (rational or irrational) is the efficient cause of action (*de An.* III 11). There is also a reference to hatred being ἐφ’ ἑσσις ... κακοῦ in *Rh.* II 4, 1382a8, and to friendly feelings as wishing (βούλεσθαι) for someone what one deems good (1380b36–37). I admit that it is not easy, though, to reconstruct every emotion or feeling as a desire for something (even when it is possible to say that all emotions have intentional objects).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *de An.* I 4, 408b11–13. For the bodily aspect of emotions also in *Rh.* see *supra* note 20.

mate efficient cause of the action. In *Top.* VI 13, 151a15–6 we find the same claim. Aristotle says that anger happens due to the supposition (διὰ τὴν ὑπόληψιν) that one has been demeaned, so that the moving cause of an emotion appears to be certain sort of representation or belief.

In *Rh.* II this is largely confirmed, as is well known.<sup>47</sup> Aristotle organizes the discussion of each particular emotion around three main aspects that the orator should know if he is to arouse a particular emotion in the audience (cf. 1378a23–30). One of these aspects is in which occasions or for which reasons (ἐπὶ ποίοις or διὰ ποία) people have a determinate emotion.<sup>48</sup> Under this heading, Aristotle offer a survey of evaluative beliefs or representations of situations and persons, for instance, it is to see a situation *as* dangerous that produces fear, to understand certain attitude *as* a wrongdoing or *as* insulting that causes anger, etc.

Being the proximate moving cause of an emotion, it is clear that, for good reasons, this is one of the aspects in which the detailed discussion of emotions in *Rh.* II is primarily focused: how to present the audience with a situation or person as bearing the key feature to trigger the desired emotion towards her/it. In other words, the orator is provided with information about how to produce in the audience the representation (φαντασία) or the belief that is the first moving cause of an emotion.<sup>49</sup>

In this description of the efficient cause of the emotions I have been dodging a controversial issue concerning the exact nature of the mental event that triggers the emotion; more precisely whether it is a belief or a φαντασία in the technical sense of *de An.* III 3, i.e. something that the agent imagines or a quasi-perceptual experience that strikes him, but that he does not necessarily judges true. The fact that Aristotle's terminology in *Rh.* II at some points oscillates between both is probably one of the causes of the controversy, although the debate is philosophical in nature. Those who defend a doxastic reading of emotions, claim that the efficient cause must be a belief of the agent, i.e. something that he deems true.<sup>50</sup> The terminology of imagination present in these chapters of *Rh.* II is explained away by this reading as referring to an *apparent* truth (i.e. the agent has a belief which causes the emotion, only that it is mistaken), so that the technical distinction between φαντασία

<sup>47</sup> The role of a representational factor as the moving cause of the supra emotion is mostly uncontroversial. There is a standing debate, though, about the exact nature of this representation, especially about whether it is a φαντασία or a belief. More on this below. Given the closeness between rhetoric and dialectic, some authors claim that the treatment and definitions of emotions of *Rh.* II are dialectical (cf. Cooper 1996; and esp. Rapp 2006) in the sense that Aristotle describes in *de An.* I 1; i.e. that they pick up only the form-cause or account of the emotion. A closer look at the matter shows that it is really the moving cause that is mainly discussed in *Rh.*

<sup>48</sup> The causal vocabulary to refer to this factor in these chapters of *Rh.* II appears more than once (cf. for instance 1380a1, 1380b35, 1388b29). This cause of the emotion is often referred to as the object of the emotion (for instance: what is feared, hated, etc.).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. esp. *MA* 7, 701b16–23, *Ib.* 8, 701b34–702a7, and esp. 702a17–19 for the role of φαντασία in the production of emotions.

<sup>50</sup> Some places where verbs associated with intellectual assent are mentioned as the trigger of emotion are *Rh.* II 1378b2, 1382b31–34, 1383a26, 33, 35, 1385b20–22 (diverse forms of οἰομαι), 1383a4, 1385b24 (diverse forms of νομίζω).

and belief is not at issue in these chapters.<sup>51</sup> The main point of this reading, especially represented by Fortenbaugh, is that, if emotions involve a doxastic ingredient as one of its causes, then they are not an essentially irrational phenomenon and they depend ultimately on a capacity proper of human beings.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, the ‘phantastic’ reading of emotions argues that when Aristotle mentions φαντασία as the cause of the emotions he is to be taken at face value; i.e. that he is using the term in its technical sense, as distinct from belief.<sup>53</sup> Given that imagination or φαντασία is common to animals, for it derives from perception,<sup>54</sup> this reading purports a radical de-intellectualization of emotions. It is not necessary, in order to have an emotion, to believe or judge that a certain evaluative representational content is true, but merely to have a quasi-perceptual evaluative image of it. One of the recent authors to argue for this interpretation, J. Moss, recognizes still that some emotions are caused by beliefs, as it appears from various passages of *Rh.* II (see note 50), but she argues that: ‘Passions can result from beliefs, because the thinking which leads to belief is supplemented by visualizing or other exercises of φαντασία [such as anticipation or memory]; passions normally entail beliefs, because the φαντασῖαι on which they are based normally trigger beliefs’.<sup>55</sup> However, since emotions are not functions of belief, according to this reading, they are irrational.

I will not take sides on this debate here, since for my purposes in this article it makes no difference whether the emotion is triggered by a belief or a φαντασία understood as a quasi-perceptual representation, in both cases it is the *content* of an evaluative representation that is the efficient cause of the emotion, which is all I need for my argument.

Let us now go back to the problem of the causal interaction between mind and body, which non-Cartesian readings intend to eliminate. Given that the efficient cause of the emotion is an intentional object (whether of a φαντασία or of a belief) of evaluative nature, hence the problem of the causal interaction between mind and body seems to be still there and is not eliminated by the fact that there are not really two pure components of the emotion. For even if there are not two pure components or elements of the emotion, there is at least one cause of the emotion which *precedes* the emotion, and which is intentional. Of course, this cause, which is the content of a representation, cannot happen without a body; but it appears to be the intentional nature of this psychophysical act, its particular content, what causes (as a moving

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Fortenbaugh 2002, 96–97; Nussbaum 1996, p. 307.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Fortenbaugh 2002, *passim*; Boeri 2007, pp. 258–260.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *de An.* III 3, 428a18–b9. Some places where φαντασία and derivatives are mentioned as the trigger of emotion are *Rh.* II 1382a21, 25, 28, 1383a17, 1385b13, 15–16, 1387b23, 26. In Aristotle’s treatment of pleasure found on *Rh.* I 11, φαντασῖαι are more clearly given a central role. Around twelve sources of pleasure (mentioned for the orator to be able to arouse that sensation in the hearers) are mentioned, and in at least four of them a φαντασία is the cause of the subsequent pleasure; cf. 1370b33–34, 1371a9, 1371a19–20.

<sup>54</sup> Moss 2012, pp. 72–73, argues accordingly that animals also feel emotions according to Aristotle, against Fortenbaugh 2002, who denies this.

<sup>55</sup> Moss 2012, p. 99. This author presents a strong and well argued ‘phantastic’ reading (cf. esp. Moss 2012, pp. 69–99). Cf. also Cooper 1996, pp. 246–247; Striker 1996, p. 291.

cause) the particular emotion. I cannot see why not to affirm that the evaluative content of these representations has causal preeminence over the psychophysical aspect of the emotion in question. For it is a representation of something as dangerous, as a wrongdoing, etc., that accelerates our pulse, gives us cold sweat, etc. and makes us desire revenge, flee, etc.

Hence, my suggestion is that in emotions there are (1) two simultaneous causes, matter and form, that are inseparable even in definition. Although there is a priority of form over matter, this priority is non-temporal. These two causes, form and matter, are represented respectively by the desire (as a pro-attitude towards an intentional object  $x$  –  $x$  being the final cause, that I will discuss in the next subsection) and by the movements of the body without which this sort of desire cannot happen. (2) There is a causal and temporal priority of the efficient cause, which is the evaluative content of a representation that triggers the emotion. This is clear from the treatment of emotions in *Rh.* II, which assumes as evident that emotions can be triggered through speech, which confirms the—in Aristotle’s view—efficient priority of the content or intentional object of a mental act over the psychophysical one.<sup>56</sup>

Charles’ and Rapp’s reading only takes into account two of the four causes of emotions, namely matter and form. If my analysis is correct, though, when we include all the four causes into the picture, then the causal interaction of mind and body remains part of the Aristotelian emotions, independent of how strongly the hylomorphism of emotions is understood. This also shows that the question about the causal interaction between soul and body in Aristotelian emotions is more complex than it seems at first sight, because ‘causal interaction’ can be taken in more than one sense, and not only in the efficient one.

Before moving to the last cause, I want to comment briefly on another aspect that the orator should know according to *Rh.* II 1, 1378a23–30, and that does not seem to fit into any of the four causes, but points to a relevant matter concerning the conditions under which a certain emotion can be triggered. This is in what personal conditions or psychological circumstances ( $\pi\tilde{\omega}\varsigma$  διακινένοι or  $\pi\tilde{\omega}\varsigma$  ἔχοντες) people tend to feel a particular emotion. Most of these have to do with beliefs and frames of mind that are related to certain situations (illness, poverty, etc.), to certain personal factors (like age), to certain physical estates (i.e. to the material cause of the emotion), and also to the character of the person.

What I find especially important from this set of considerations of *Rh.* is that they bring to the foreground a new and relevant aspect which was absent in *de An* I 1. This is the character as having a crucial role in the arousal of any emotion, so that there is not a necessary or mechanical causal link between a set of possible inputs and an emotion. One and the same speech may not have the same emotional effect in every member of the public. The mediation of character in this respect can be understood in this way: the moral character determines how one and the same fact or situation is *evaluated* by an agent, so that, presented with the same ‘input’, two

<sup>56</sup> D. Frede 1996, p. 272, puts it very perspicuously: ‘In short, we try to change the people’s beliefs, rather than their temperature, because a change of belief will also change their feelings.’ Cf. also Nussbaum 1996, p. 305.

agents with different characters would have different emotional reactions because they would have different evaluative representations of it. For instance, the presence of a mouse in the house, can be evaluated by John as dangerous (who then freaks out about it) and by Francis as mere inconvenience (who then calmly places mouse-traps). All indicates that the character determines ultimately the intentional object of the emotion (since it entails an evaluative component) and hence the emotion felt. Those who endorse a doxastic reading of Aristotle's emotions, naturally tend to understand that the character depends mostly on the agent's practical *beliefs*. However, even if certain beliefs are part of one's character, it is true that the excellences of character are located by Aristotle in the irrational part of soul, which can listen to reason, but it is not itself rational. In connection to this, Aristotle insists in *EN* II 2–3 that the excellences of character are referred to pleasure and pain, giving mainly examples in which corporal and irrational pleasures are involved. There is also an interesting suggestion in *EN* X 1178a14–16 that some excellences of character are also due to the body, and also the explicit claim that 'being connected with the passions also, the moral excellences must belong to our composite nature' (1178a19–21), i.e. to the fact that we are an ensouled body and not merely an intellect. If these suggestions are to be taken seriously, then probably the moral character of an agent is closely related to the nature of the compound (*a*) as a cause of the emotion.

(c) The end or 'that for the sake of which'.

Using the example of anger, Aristotle claims in (c) that the definition of an emotion should also make reference to that for the sake of which (ἐνεκα τοῦδε), i.e. to the end. In the case of anger, this is the object of the desire: the formal cause of anger is the *desire* of *x*, the final cause of anger is *x*. From this it is clear that this cause has to be simultaneous with the formal and the material one. And the intentional content of *x*, that is stated as a proposition, is clearly an essential part of *which* the emotion in question is. It is also clear in anger that the content of *x* has a direct relation to the content of the efficient cause of the emotion: moreover, that content is *determined* by the content of the efficient cause. If I think that Bill has offended or demeaned me, I get angry, i.e. I have a blood boiling type of desire *for revenge against Bill*. In the case of anger, thus, the end is clearly the revenge against the individual that I think, believe, or imagine, has offended me.

As I just mentioned, in *Rh.* II Aristotle organizes the discussion of each particular emotion around three main aspects that the orator should know. The third of these aspects is 'towards what or whom an emotion is felt (τίσιν or πρὸς τίνας)'. As A. Kenny has noticed, in Aristotle's treatment of emotions this is the closest we find to the intentional object of the emotion.<sup>57</sup> This aspect of the emotion is usually considered in *Rh.* II together with the aspect that I have identified with the efficient cause of the emotion, and for good reasons: they are clearly correlative. I don't want revenge from any one at random but from he who I think has offended me; I don't

<sup>57</sup> For the object of emotions cf. Kenny 2003, pp. 131–141. For Aristotle's anticipation of the concept of formal object of an emotion in *Rh.* II see Kenny 2003, p. 135.



fear any one at random but her that I think can harm me. To this extent one could think that this also alludes to (or is part of) what in *de An.* I 1 is the end of the emotion. The reason is that, if an emotion involves a desire of  $x$ , and  $x$  is the final cause of the emotion, and  $x$  appears necessarily under a description which is correlative to the efficient cause that motivated the emotional response, then the person or thing towards what or whom an emotion is felt is part of that description of the final cause  $x$ . In this sense it can be understood the traditional conception that the object of the emotion coincides with its cause. To be more precise, it should be added that it is correlative to its efficient cause, but that there are more causes than this that can have more or less preeminence in particular circumstances, as Aristotle acknowledges when he considers in *Rh.* II in what personal conditions or psychological circumstances (πῶς διακινένοι or πῶς ἔχοντες) people tend to feel a particular emotion (cf. *supra*). Matter, for instance, is a cause as a condition of possibility, that sometimes can have such a strong preeminence as to be picked out as the cause of the emotion in a given circumstance, for instance, when someone, being drunk, gets angry at an insignificant offense (cf. the analogous example in *Rh.* II 2, 1379a16–19). In this case, the material cause of the emotion is not the same as its object, but its efficient cause understood as the evaluative (however mistaken) representation is still formally correlative to the object.

In anger, as well as in the emotions presented as causes of actions in *Rh.* I 10, there is a recognizable end that eventually leads to an action. However, in other emotions presented in *Rh.* II the final cause or end is not necessarily clear, especially when they are not defined in terms of a desire. Noticing this, Fortenbaugh claims that there are practical and non-practical emotions, in the sense that the ones that have an end tend to lead to action.<sup>58</sup> Even if this is correct, the fact that some emotions do not lead to action does not exclude their having an end, i.e. their being intentional in the sense of aiming affectively to an object. Although they do not appear in the definition of emotions in *de An.* I 1, we may guess that both the pleasure and the pain that go together with emotions account partly for this dimension. The reason is evidently that we usually desire what we think is pleasant or will lead to some sort of pleasure, we want to avoid what we perceive or anticipate as painful, and we desire what we think will relieve us from a present pain.<sup>59</sup> This seems confirmed by the fact that not every desire leads necessarily to action, as Aristotle recognizes in *EN* III 1111b23–24: we can wish things that we cannot accomplish on our own, and we can even wish the impossible, like being immortal. Another instance of a desire of an impossible end can be reconstructed in shame, for the object of my shame can be well described as something that I wish I had not done. So not every desire leads to an action, but still every desire is aimed at an object. This is the same as saying that desire is intentional, and given the peculiar propositional attitude that is desire, its intentional object can be described as an end (ἐνεκα τοῦδε). It would be hasty to conclude from this that the end of every emotion

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Leighton 1996, p. 211.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *MA* 8, 701b35–36.

can be simply identified with its object; but in some emotions at least this certainly seems to be the case.

## 9.5 Conclusion

Through this article I have analyzed, first, the context of the presentation of emotions in *de An I 1* in order to assess the methodological aim of this discussion and the sense in which emotions involve both body and soul in an inextricable way in Aristotle. Taking into account the reading of Rapp and Charles that underlines this inextricability to conclude that Aristotle would have thus avoided the problem of the causal interaction between soul (or mind) and body, I have considered what this reading has left out. Most of *de An I 1* is concerned with only two causes of the emotion, matter and form, and so is Rapp's and Charles' reading. In making a reconstruction of the four causes involved in emotions, I hope I have successfully shown that the causal interaction of mind and body remains part of the Aristotelian emotions, especially when one considers the efficient cause of emotion, which is an intentional object that cannot be but the content of a mental act.

Schematically, I have suggested that emotions involve, on the one hand, simultaneous causes, which are matter, form, and the intentional object (which in some emotions can be identified with the end) of the emotion. On the other hand, there is a fourth, efficient cause of the emotion, which is the evaluative content of a representation that triggers the emotion. Each of these contributes in a different manner to the emotion, and depending on the particular circumstances can acquire more or less preeminence than the others.

The schematic and fairly preliminary analysis of the fourfold causal structure of emotions that I have offered in the second part of this article is also intended as a hermeneutical starting point for a study of particular emotions in Aristotle and beyond. The Aristotelian manifold conception of causality seems *prima facie* a promising stance to account for the many aspects of the complex phenomenon of emotion, including its physiological causes, its mental causes, and its intentional object. The productivity of this hermeneutical strategy, in any case, shall be put to the test in further analyses of particular emotions. This task I intend to undertake on future occasions.

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# Chapter 10

## Another Dissimilarity between Moral Virtue and Skills: An Interpretation of *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4



Javier Echeñique

**Abstract** In *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4 Aristotle famously raises a puzzle concerning moral habituation, and he seems to dissolve it by recourse to the analogy between moral virtue and skills. A new interpretation of the chapter is offered on the basis of an important evaluative dissimilarity then noted by Aristotle, one almost universally disregarded by interpreters of the chapter. I elucidate the nature of the dissimilarity in question and argue for its paramount importance for understanding Aristotle's conception of moral agency. I also show that it is the particularly intricate and puzzling character of the chapter that has prevented scholars from noticing such a dissimilarity and from integrating it to the interpretation of the chapter.

### 10.1 Introduction

Since the dawn of moral speculation the analogy between moral virtue and skills (τέχναι) has been profusely employed by moral philosophers such as the early Plato and the Stoics, to elucidate and provide support to their respective conceptions of moral virtue – conceptions about its very nature and its causal relationship with human happiness. The analogy is still considered by some contemporary philosophers, such as Julia Annas, as shedding light upon various aspects of moral virtue, such as its development, or the practical reasoning of the virtuous person.<sup>1</sup>

As is well known, in various junctures of his ethical writings Aristotle cautions against taking too far the comparison between moral virtues and skills. He maintains that, whereas systematic knowledge and capacities in general (including skills), can be used for either of two contrary ends – a doctor can, in virtue of the very same knowledge, both cure and kill – virtues of character are dispositions:

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<sup>1</sup>For Annas' skill-based account of virtue, see Annas (2011).

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when we possess them we are said to be practically and affectively disposed *in a particular way*, i.e. well, not badly (*EN* 1129a11–17). And even more significantly, whereas skills are concerned with production – which has an end beyond itself, the finished product – virtues of character are concerned with a different sort of thing altogether: *πρᾶξις*, conduct – which does not have an end beyond itself (*EN* 1140a1–b25).

There is, nonetheless, another aspect of the analogy that Aristotle deemed particularly misleading. As we shall see, the virtue-skill parallel raises the following question: if, as Aristotle undoubtedly recognises, full health or a clean victory can come about *by chance* as well as by the productive agency of the art of medicine or athletic skills, why not say that a fully good outcome, from the moral point of view, can come about by chance as well – i.e. independently of moral agency? But if a fully good outcome from the moral point of view can indeed come about by chance, or by any other means *outside* the agency of moral virtue, then such an outcome cannot possibly derive any portion of its total goodness from its being ‘produced’ by moral agency, when it is in fact so produced. In other words, the moral virtue-skill parallel suggests that the value of acting *from* moral virtue (i.e. moral agency) is in itself null, or at least non-intrinsic and purely derivative. For – if we continue with the parallel – we might think of the goodness of moral virtue as one that merely derives from its capacity – when possessed by an agent as a disposition – to be a *reliable producer* of such a ‘fully good moral outcome’. On this picture that ultimately results from the parallel, voluntariness and the further conditions of acting from virtue (i.e. the conditions of moral agency) that Aristotle recognises (such as acting from rational choice, for the sake of the act itself, and from a firm moral character) derive their significance merely from their being ‘causally linked’ in a peculiarly strong sense to a morally good outcome which – just like a clean victory or full health – has been already established as good quite independently of moral agency. On this parallel between moral virtue and skills, acting from moral virtue ends up having the sort of value that consequentialist accounts attribute to moral virtue.

It is of the utmost importance, accordingly, to see that in *Ethica Nicomachea* II 4, as I will attempt to show, Aristotle firmly opposes this consequentialist conception of the value of acting from moral virtue – and also to see *why* he does so. Aristotle notes in this chapter a crucial dissimilarity between moral virtue and skills – one that allows him to reject a consequentialist account of the value of moral agency. The dissimilarity in question consists in establishing the intrinsic goodness of virtuous character and moral agency, and the purely extrinsic and derivative one pertaining to proficient, skilled agency. Acting *from* moral virtue, in other words, enhances the goodness of the ‘moral outcome’ – or it may well be its only source. Supporting this claim is the primary purpose of this article.

Nonetheless, I also want to show how unveiling this dissimilarity between moral virtue and skills contributes to the solution to the *aporia* about habituation raised in *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4, thus forming an integral part of that solution. For it is my suspicion that scholars’ failure to understand the complex nature of this solution has prevented them from recognising here the aforementioned evaluative dissimilarity

between moral virtue and skills.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, offering an interpretation of the *aporia* about habituation and Aristotle's strategy for dissolving it – in sum, an interpretation of the bulk of *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4 – will be my secondary aim.

## 10.2 The *Aporia* about Habituation and its Initial Dissolution

In the first three chapters of *Nicomachean Ethics* II, Aristotle has been arguing that the moral virtues result from habituation. Even though we are naturally receptive of them, it is not by nature that we come to acquire them (as in the case of the senses), but rather by frequently behaving in ways characteristic of virtue whenever such behaviour is called for (and preferably, from our earliest youth). Furthermore, Aristotle has made an important claim that seems to be stronger than the habituation claim: virtue “is exercised in the same kinds of actions as those from which it comes about” (1105a15–16, cf. 1104a27–b3). For example, we become courageous by being habituated in enduring fearful things in the right way, and once we have become courageous, it is this same conduct of ‘enduring fearful things in the right way’ that we shall best be able to perform.

Also significant for our present purposes is to note that Aristotle has made use of the analogy with skills to provide support for the habituation claim and the identity claims: The habituation claim is also true of the acquisition of skills, perhaps a more conspicuous process which can serve accordingly to illustrate the more unclear case of moral habituation. Just as we become lyre-players by playing the lyre, or builders by building, so too we become just or moderate by performing just or moderate deeds (cf. 1103a31–b2, 1103b6–17). Further, Aristotle also illustrates the identity claim with the case of strength, which he treats in these contexts as a skill (1104a30–3).

Given that Aristotle has previously argued for the habituation claim and the identity claim – and in both cases partly on the basis of an analogy with skills – it is not surprising to see the philosopher confronted with an *aporia* in the first lines of *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4: ‘What do we mean by saying that in order to become just, men need to do just things (τὰ δίκαια), and in order to become moderate they need to do moderate things (τὰ σώφρονα)?’ (1105a17–19). In other words: How can the habituation claim be true? For it seems that to do just or moderate things implies that the agent carrying out these actions is *already* just or moderate (what I shall call the ‘act-sufficiency claim’). After all, according to the identity claim, both the actions leading to the acquisition of moral virtue and those through which an already

<sup>2</sup>And perhaps also from simply recognising the dissimilarity itself. A good example is Tom Angier's recent book, where he does not even consider *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4 as containing an argument against the ‘evaluative’ assimilation of moral virtue to skills (see Angier (2010, pp. 41–49)). Some interpreters have even attributed to Aristotle some sort of consequentialist *assimilation* of virtuous agency to skills concerning the way they contribute to the value of their typical products. The most prominent example is Sauvé Meyer (2011, p. 47 and p. 162). Her view serves as an example of the sort of consequentialist view I have mentioned.



acquired virtue is manifested, are *the same*. Aristotle of course has not yet explained what exactly he means by ‘the same’ in the identity claim, but it is reasonable to assume that the identity claim, thus vaguely formulated, motivates the act-sufficiency claim and thus renders problematic the thesis about moral habituation.

Nor is it surprising, in light of what has gone before, to see the philosopher encouraging the *aporia* about habituation by recourse to the analogy with skills (τέχναι). Indeed, the same problem arises for skills. How can one learn to be a grammarian or a musician by doing ‘grammatical things’ (τὰ γραμματικά) or by doing ‘musical things’ (τὰ μουσικά), if doing these ‘things’ implies (because of the parallel identity claim for skills, we might suppose) that the person doing them is already in possession of the skill of grammar or music? (cf. 1105a20–1).

Aristotle develops an intricate argument in order to solve the *aporia* about habituation, which I have divided in three parts. His first maneuver is pretty straightforward. He claims that this supposed act-sufficiency implication of ‘doing *F* things’ fails to apply in the domain of skills:

[T1] It is possible to produce something grammatical (γραμματικόν τι ποιῆσαι) both by chance and at someone else’s prompting. One will only count as literate, then, if one both does something grammatical and does it grammatically (γραμματικῶς); and this is what is done in accordance with one’s own grammatical expertise (τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ γραμματικὴν). *EN* 1105a22–26.<sup>3</sup>

Since Aristotle has used the analogy with skills to motivate the *aporia* about habituation, the most natural interpretation here is that he intends to extend this initial dissolution of the *aporia* by analogy to the case of moral virtues.<sup>4</sup> The resulting analogical argument for the dissolution is then quite straightforward. Since one can do grammatical things both by chance and at someone else’s prompting, this shows that one can do grammatical things without oneself being already in possession of the skill of grammar. By analogy, one can do *just* things by chance and at someone else’s prompting, and so one can do *just* things without being already in possession of the virtue of justice. That respect in which moral virtue and skills are analogous is precisely that both skills and moral virtues are gradually acquired by trial and error (chance) and through the guidance of experts (at someone else’s prompting), by the repeated bringing about of ‘*F* outcomes’ or ‘things’ such as something γραμματικόν, or something σῶφρον.

Because the mere ‘*F*-outcomes’ (γινόμενα) do not imply the *possession* of the corresponding *F*-skill or *F*-virtue, the initial *aporia* about habituation is dissolved. For that *aporia* was based on the act-sufficiency claim (i.e. to do just or moderate ‘things’ implies that the agent carrying out these acts is already just or moderate), which has now been shown to be false in a sense. Surely the act-sufficiency claim is true with regard to a *different* sort of actions, such as doing something *grammatically* (γραμματικῶς), i.e. in accordance with one’s own grammatical skill (κατὰ τὴν

<sup>3</sup>I will be using Bywater 1894 edition of the *Ethica Nicomachea*. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup>This is for instance the interpretation of Grant (1885), Joachim (1951) and Taylor (2006) (see their commentaries *ad loc.*).

ἐν αὐτῷ γραμματικῇ). In general, in order for an action to *imply* the possession of the corresponding *F*-skill, it does not only suffice that one brings about an *F* thing, but it is also required that one does it in an *F*-way (e.g. grammatically), that is, (a) in conformity with the expertise peculiar to that *F*-skill (thus ruling out its being a mere result of chance), and (b) where the *F*-skill in question is possessed by the agent himself (thus ruling out its being done at someone else's prompting). By the former analogy we are naturally encouraged to make the same claims with regard to moral dispositions, *mutatis mutandis*. Thus, Aristotle will talk of doing something *moderately* (σοφρόνως), i.e. in accordance with (one's own) virtue (κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν, 1105a29), when the action fulfils both of these conditions.

Does this mean that the identity claim was false? Clearly not. It only means that the identity between deeds involved in habituation and fully virtuous ones cannot consist in their having the same causal conditions. But then notice that Aristotle owes us a positive explanation of what this claim means. I shall return to this point when discussing the third part of the argument.

### 10.3 The Dissimilarity between Moral Virtue and Skills

Nonetheless, despite his having apparently solved the initial *aporia* about habituation, Aristotle continues, in what seems to be a *digression*, or so I will argue:

[T2] Further (ἔτι), the case of the skills and that of moral virtues do not even resemble each other: the things that come about through the agency of skills (τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα) contain in themselves the mark of a good condition (τὸ εὖ ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς), so that it is enough (ἀρκεῖ) if they come to be in a certain condition, whereas the things that come about in accordance with the moral virtues (τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς γινόμενα) count as done justly (δικαιῶς) or moderately (σοφρόνως) not merely when they themselves are in certain condition, but also when the agent is in a certain condition in doing them: first, if he does them knowingly, secondly if he decides to do them, and decides to do them for themselves, and thirdly if he does them from a firm and unchanging disposition. *EN* 1105a26-33.

Aristotle is now pointing towards a major dissimilarity between τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα (“the things that come about through the agency of skill”) and τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς γινόμενα (“the things that come about in accordance with the virtues”). It is natural to think that this dissimilarity somehow affects the initial dissolution of the *aporia* about habituation in T1, since that dissolution was based on the *analogy* with skills. Before determining how this dissimilarity affects the initial dissolution (see next section), however, an interpretation of what Aristotle means by “τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα” in 1105a27 is absolutely vital.

For reasons of economy, let me provisionally translate the expression ‘τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα’ in T2 simply as ‘works of skill’. What I call the ‘Aggregative Reading’ takes the contrast in T2 between the goodness (τὸ εὖ) located in works of skill and the goodness located in the things that come about in accordance with the virtues, to depend on the contrast drawn in the lines immediately following T2

between the *kind of conditions* that must be fulfilled by an agent if either of these *F* things is to have some goodness:

[T3] When it is a matter of the possession (τὸ ἔχειν) of skills, these conditions do not count, except for knowledge itself; but when it comes to the possession of the moral virtues, knowledge has a small or no significance, whereas the force of the other conditions is no small thing but counts for everything, and these indeed result from the repeated performance of just and moderate things. *EN* 1105a33-b5.

According to the Aggregative Reading, whereas the things that come about in accordance with the moral virtues must be carried out with knowledge, chosen on their own account, and issue from a firm and unchanging moral disposition, *works of skill* must be carried out *only with knowledge*, that is, the knowledge that defines the corresponding skill. Accordingly, this interpretation takes the contrast in passage T2 to be a contrast drawn *among things done in an F-way*. So for instance, J. A. Stewart comments on Aristotle's conditions for acting from virtue in T2:

'Unless these conditions in the agent be fulfilled, we do not speak of the moral value of actions: but works of art have their artistic merit independently of any such conditions in the artist, *except of course that of his having knowledge*'.<sup>5</sup>

"Works of art" is Stewart's translation of 'τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα'. Against Stewart, it can be said that when Aristotle says in T2 that knowledge *is* relevant for skills (1105b1–2), he is clearly referring to those productions that reflect the *possession* (τὸ ἔχειν, b1) of a skill (i.e. things done in an *F-way*); but nothing of what Aristotle says in T2 about *the goodness* of works of skill suggests that by "works of skill" (τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα) he means things done in an *F-way*, and which reflect the possession of *F-skill* accordingly.

Indeed, Aristotle has unequivocally been using the expression 'X κατὰ F' to mark the fact that *X* is something done in a certain way, that is, something that is done *thanks to F* and which reflects the possession of *F* – where *F* (in the accusative) is the corresponding skill or the moral virtues.<sup>6</sup> For current purposes, it will suffice to note that Aristotle here uses the expression 'X κατὰ F' to indicate a sort of *causal* relationship between *X* and *F* – in particular, I should add, one in which some typical result, *X*, is caused by something *F* according to certain rules or standards intrinsic to *F*. By contrast, the use of the preposition 'ὑπό' plus genitive ('through the agency of') in "τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα" rather suggests that through the latter phrase he intends to express a slightly *different* relationship between skills and γινόμενα.

Some interpreters have indeed suggested that the two prepositions 'ὑπό' and 'κατὰ' express *the same* relationship in our passage, namely a straightforwardly causal or productive relationship, but that Aristotle employs 'ὑπό' to indicate the causal relationship between a finished product and the corresponding *skill*, while he employs 'κατὰ' to indicate the causal relationship between conduct and the

<sup>5</sup> Stewart (1892, p. 182). Italics are mine.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ γραμματικῇ (1105a25), τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς γινόμενα (1105a28–9).

corresponding *moral disposition*.<sup>7</sup> Against this interpretation, it must be noted that at 1105a25 Aristotle uses the preposition ‘κατά’ also in connection with the art of grammar (one of his paradigmatic skills), to indicate that something is done *thanks* to the art of grammar.<sup>8</sup> Why then not use the same preposition κατά, instead of ὑπό in τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα, if he intended to express the very same causal relationship between some work or product and the corresponding skill? Some other explanation needs to be offered for Aristotle’s shift from the use of ‘κατά’ to the use of ‘ὑπό’ in the phrase in question. I shall suggest one below.

In the meantime, it must be noted that Sarah Broadie’s comments have an implication similar to Stewart’s:

*Once chance and direction by another have been eliminated (22-23), X counts as a work of skill or technical expertise if it is seen to have the qualities typical of products of the expertise in question. But for Y to count as a work of justice, etc. (under the same conditions) it is not enough that Y be seen to be the kind of thing the just person would do: certain conditions must also be seen to hold of the agent of Y.*<sup>9</sup>

Broadie’s view is clearly supported by her (and Rowe’s) reading of τὸ εὖ ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς (1105a27) as ‘the mark of their being done well’.<sup>10</sup> This adverbial reading misleadingly suggests that, once more, by ‘works of skill’ (i.e. τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα) Aristotle is referring to things done in an *F*-way (e.g. grammatically or musically). Nonetheless, if we translate the expression τὸ εὖ ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς as ‘contain in themselves the mark of a good condition’,<sup>11</sup> then this interpretation is not so obvious. If by ‘a work of skill’ it is meant τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα at 1105a27, then it is not at all obvious, for all Aristotle says in T2, that in order for *X* to be counted as a work of skill, one needs to *eliminate* chance and direction by another, as Broadie suggests: for all Aristotle has said in T2, *even if X* is an accidental outcome, *X* can still be said to be a *good* ‘work of skill’ (e.g. a well formed sentence, a clean victory, etc.).

Now, that this is indeed the case is confirmed by several texts where Aristotle claims that works of skill, such as a well-formed sentence or a house, can be generated by chance (ἄπο τύχης). He claims that products can come about ‘by spontaneity and chance’ (*Metaph.* 1032a29), and he makes the same claim with regard to specific works of skill, such as health (*Metaph.* 1049a18) and the effects of tragedy (*Po.* 1454a11). Actually, it is his considered view in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that ‘in

<sup>7</sup> John Burnet, for instance, suggests that the prepositions ὑπό and κατά ‘correspond to the distinction between ποιεῖν and πράττειν, ἔργον and πράξις’ respectively (Burnet (1900, p. 87)). The same interpretation is advanced by Gauthier and Jolif (1970, p. 130).

<sup>8</sup> The phrase with ὑπό is not necessarily Aristotle’s stock phrase to refer to artifacts. Whereas he sometimes uses this phrase (e.g. *EN* 1175a24), he also uses the phrase with κατά in other places (e.g. *Ph.* 193a32).

<sup>9</sup> Broadie and Rowe (2002, p. 300). Italics are my own. For similar interpretations, see also Tricot (1959, p. 98), Annas (1993, p. 68), and more recently Jimenez (2016, p. 16).

<sup>10</sup> Broadie and Rowe (2002, translation *ad loc.*).

<sup>11</sup> Or ‘have their goodness in themselves’ (Ross) or ‘ont leur valeur en elles-mêmes’ (Tricot). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle tends to use τὸ εὖ and τὸ ἀγαθόν interchangeably (e.g. *EN* 1097b27).

a way chance and skill are concerned with the same objects' (*EN* 1140a18), in the sense that both chance and skills can be causally responsible of bringing about the same objects.

As a result, the Aggregative Reading obscures the significance of the contrast between virtues and skills that Aristotle is drawing upon in T2. Perhaps the preposition ὑπὸ in τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα misleads us into thinking of things that actually come about through the agency of a skill, but the phrase is to be understood as referring to a class of entities such as 'grammatical things' and 'musical things' (*F*-things) that, as we have seen, can be the result of both (i) expert direction by another and (ii) chance. Accordingly, Aristotle cannot be referring with this phrase to things that *actually* come about as a result of the exercise of a skill.

So, what does the phrase mean? Perhaps our phrase stands for those things that *characteristically* come about through the agency of a skill. Unfortunately, there are certain end-conditions, such as health, of which it would be misleading to say that they come about 'characteristically' as a result of e.g. the exercise of medicine. Health is most characteristically the result of non-artificial factors, such as natural weight loss or natural evacuation (*cf. Metaph.* 1013b1). So perhaps the best alternative is to understand the phrase in this context as 'things that *can* come about through the agency of skill'. I am not saying that this is what the phrase *means*. The point I am making is about how to understand the 'extension' of the phrase, so to say; to wit, the class of entities of which the phrase is truly predicated, which is much larger than the class of entities that are the actual products of the exercise of a skill. For the sake of brevity, I will simply use the term 'artifacts' to refer to this larger class of entities.

Now, if I am right, the contrast in passage T2 between virtues and skills is indeed much sharper than what the Aggregative Reading suggests. If τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα is effectively being used to refer to artifacts, Aristotle would be saying that, *even when they are the result of chance* artifacts contain in themselves the criterion of their goodness. Now this idea is quite fascinating and probably true. Suppose we discover that, by an extraordinary coincidence, an ape typed an English sentence with no grammatical faults. Aristotle would be saying that such a sentence can still be judged good by grammatical standards, provided that it is spelled according to the rules of English grammar; its 'condition' is then to be judged good independently of the way in which it was produced (i.e. whether or not *according to the art of grammar in the full sense*).

This is an important feature of artifacts (in the broad sense previously specified), and one that contrasts neatly with actions. Buildings fit for habitation, military victories, well-constructed sentences or symphonies, can all be unconditionally good in the sense that they can be regarded as being what they ought to be or as functioning in the way they ought to function regardless of whether they are the actual products of the proficient exercise of a τέχνη. The consequence is that *from* a well-formed sentence I can infer that someone was in possession of grammatical knowledge, provided that I make sure that (i) *he* was in fact the one who wrote the sentence and that (ii) he wrote the sentence in accordance with his own grammatical knowledge. That is, contrary to what the Aggregative Reading suggests, I do not

have to *first* establish (i) and (ii) in order to know that such a sentence is well-formed.

I have suggested that this contrast between skills and excellent ethical dispositions is spelled out in terms of their corresponding ‘works’ or ‘operations’ (ἔργα): what can be the final *product* of an activity of technical production (the house, the victory, etc.), or an ethically significant piece of conduct (πρᾶξις) in the case of moral dispositions (cf. *EE* 1219a14–18). Skills, however, have yet another ‘operation’, namely, the *activity of production itself*, the ποιήσις. Now, it is possible that by τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα Aristotle also refers to the process of production, and not only the final product. After all, the activity of production *is* something that occurs in virtue of the agency of a skill. If you saw an ape typing at random you wouldn’t say that it was *writing* something. Nevertheless, wouldn’t this present a problem for my non-aggregative interpretation of T2, given that – one may think – the process of production itself *cannot* come about by chance?

The answer is ‘No’. When Aristotle explicitly refers to the activity of production, by saying that ‘it is possible *to produce* (ποιῆσαι) something grammatical both *by chance* and at someone else’s prompting’ (1105a22–23), it is evident that he does not take ‘to produce’ to mean the actual exercise of τέχνη. As a matter of fact, if what I have argued is correct, it is perfectly reasonable for processes of production to be interpreted as ‘artifacts’, at least whenever the question concerning their goodness is at stake. If a given artifact can be deemed good independently of its being the product of the exercise of a skill, then *any process* whatsoever – whether identical to such exercise or not – can be deemed good in so far as it brings about such an artifact. According to this view that I am now attributing (somehow tentatively) to Aristotle, the only consideration relevant to the increasing or decreasing goodness of a given process of production is its being more or less *reliable* in bringing about the artifact, which has already been established as ‘good’, indeed as good as it can be (see below), on independent grounds. If a skill happens in turn to be good at all, we might now suppose, this is only due to its being the source of a reliable processes of production of a good artifact.

To be more faithful to Aristotle’s own way of expressing this contrast in T2, we could say that, according to him, whenever we judge an artefact to be good in this extrinsic fashion, this is *enough* (ἄρκει, a28), that is, we have ‘all that we want’ in terms of ‘technical goodness’, so to speak. But this is not the case with moral agency, for whereas judging the condition of an artifact as technically good in this extrinsic fashion is enough, the condition of a piece of morally significant conduct or ‘outcome’ judged in this extrinsic fashion is not enough, that is, it does not give us all that we want in terms of *moral* goodness. We only have all that we want in this latter sphere when the action is done in a certain way, that is to say, when the moral agent as such is fully responsible for it. This is then the dissimilarity between moral dispositions and skills that Aristotle has in mind in T2.

In sum, the contrast in T2 between the goodness of artifacts and morally significant behavior is not based, as the Aggregative Reading suggests, on the difference between the sort of conditions internal to the producer in the one case, and the ones internal to the moral agent in the other – conditions that artifacts and morally



significant actions have to meet in order to count as fully good. Rather, the difference in question is grounded on the fact that, whereas such inward conditions are irrelevant to the true goodness of an artifact, they are of the utmost importance to the true or full goodness of a morally significant deed.

I am conscious that a result of my interpretation is that Aristotle is left with the uncomfortable notion of a virtuous ‘outcome’ or ‘deed’ (‘the moral outcome’) that can be identified as such, that is as *just*, *moderate*, etc., quite independently of its being the result of virtuous agency at all (in particular, even in cases where knowledge of the action as just, moderate, etc. is not available to its agent). For instance, if I gave the money back to the person I owed it to thinking that the envelope contains a love-letter, Aristotle would have to say that such a deed was a *just* thing. *This* would be the equivalent of the ape typing a well-formed English sentence. I will address this problem below, but for the moment let it suffice to point out that this agency-independent notion is certainly present in Aristotle’s *Ethics*.

## 10.4 The Second Dissolution of the *Aporia*

How is the second section of Aristotle’s argument, T2, logically connected with the previous *aporia* about habituation and its initial dissolution in T1? More precisely, the difficulty consists in understanding how the evaluative dissimilarity between skills and moral virtue noted in T2 bears upon the *aporia* about habituation and its initial dissolution in T1 based on the analogical argument.

Firstly, as we have seen, Aristotle states the initial *aporia* about habituation. He says this *aporia* doesn’t hold for skills because the act-sufficiency claim is here false; and because in one respect skills and moral virtue are analogous, the analogy helps him make the case for claiming that the act-sufficiency claim doesn’t hold for moral virtue either. Nonetheless, now in T2 Aristotle is not satisfied with that solution. He now concedes that there is a difference between the domain of skills and the domain of virtue, the difference being that something inward is necessary for our being completely satisfied with the goodness of virtuous action, namely, some internal conditions of the moral agent. None of the parallel conditions linking the producer with the artifact – not even knowledge – is required for our being completely satisfied with the goodness of artifacts.

Now, had we likened moral virtue to skills, as the initial analogical argument did, but *disregarded* the disanalogy just indicated, we would have been led to believe the wrong thing. We would have been led to believe that just like a well-formed sentence is in as good a condition as it can get, so too when I give the money back to the person I owed it to thinking that the envelope contains a love-letter, this *just outcome* (that the creditor got his money back, justice was served) is as good as it can get – and perhaps the only value and significance of moral virtue would now lie in its being a reliable producer of good outcomes. That is, we would have ended attributing to Aristotle a form of consequentialism. If, on the other hand, we do not disregard the evaluative disanalogy, there is a clear respect in which the analogy



with skills is misleading, because it suggests that just as in artifacts we get all we want when the artifact is in a certain condition extrinsically, so with ‘just things’ or ‘moderate things’ we get all we want (from human agents *qua* human) when the same holds. Doing these deeds justly or moderately would not add any value to the action: it would merely allow us to *infer* from it the possession of moral character by the agent, as in the case of doing something skillfully. And the analogy on its own misleadingly suggests this picture of moral agency, I believe, because: (i) it forces us to make sense of a *just* or *moderate* outcome that is independent of the inward conditions of moral agency and yet *identical* to the action issuing from such conditions; and (ii) the obvious and natural way of making sense of this sort of outcomes is to think that there is some extrinsic criterion of goodness, independent of the inward conditions of moral agency, that applies to them.<sup>12</sup>

And now my interpretation, which involves two claims. (I) First, as a result of this evaluative disanalogy, the initial analogy between virtue and skills that served Aristotle well in the initial response to the *aporia* is misleading, as we have seen. So clearly, when Aristotle says ‘Further (ἔτι), the case of the skills and that of moral virtues do not even resemble each other’ (1105a25–6), at the beginning of T2, this emphatically does not contribute to the initial dissolution of the *aporia* based on the skill-analogy. Logically at the very least the point introduced here seems to be a *digression* to the previous argument.

I am conscious that perhaps the trouble with taking it like this is grammatical: it is now not clear how to make sense of the adverb ἔτι (1105a25), which clearly isn’t in the right position to mean anything other than: ‘Another point’ – as opposed to discharging a digressive function. Perhaps because the adverb ἔτι is most naturally taken, grammatically speaking, as adding to the immediately previous dissolution of the *aporia*, most commentators have tried to interpret T2 precisely as an addition to or a way of strengthening the initial analogical dissolution. It is not at all clear, however, how the evaluative *disanalogy* between virtue and skills here introduced could be an addition to the initial *analogical* dissolution.<sup>13</sup> Surely, because of this

<sup>12</sup>In fact, there are reasons to think with Arthur Adkins that the traditional conception of ἀρετή reinforced this natural suggestion. Adkins argues that such a conception, ‘from Homer onwards, always commended the correct reaction, or the production of the correct result, in a given situation, regardless of the manner in which the result was produced or the intentions of the agent’, adding that ‘the explicit linking of εὐδαιμονία and ἀρετή merely emphasised this’ (1963, p. 332). Adkins himself suggests that the first in the history of philosophy to remove this ‘chief impediment’ was in fact Aristotle (p. 334), by insisting that any action performed from ἀρετή must satisfy certain conditions internal to the agent. I think Adkins was right.

<sup>13</sup>The clearest interpretation along these lines is Alexander Grant’s (1885, commentary *ad loc.*). His view is that T2 helps to solve the *aporia* about habituation by somehow *reinforcing* the analogical argument initially offered by Aristotle to dissolve it. For the point of this analogical argument was to show that if we have reason to suppose that mere getting *F*-things done is not proof of the possession of skill, then we have reason to suppose that it is no proof of the possession of moral virtue either. If Aristotle’s second argument now in T2 consists in arguing that, whereas an artifact can be judged as being good by its intrinsic properties, mere doing of ‘just things’ or ‘moderate things’ cannot be so judged, it follows that *it is even more evident* that in the case of moral virtues the mere doings of these things do not imply the possession of a just or moderate character by the

difficulty, most interpreters, wanting to follow the natural reading of ἔτι, simply choose to disregard the evaluative disanalogy, as I have interpreted it in the previous section. The usual reading is once more based on the Aggregative Reading.<sup>14</sup>

(II) What I want to suggest is that there is a second alternative: the ἔτι sentence does indeed introduce a further reason, but not for strengthening or adding to the analogical argument – rather, a reason for directly dissolving the *aporia*, a reason that is directly based on the evaluative disanalogy. The crucial point, I think, is to realise what is involved in Aristotle's concession that it is not the case (as the initial analogy might have suggested) that just as in artifacts we get all we want when the artifact is in a certain extrinsic condition, so with the possible outcomes of agency we get all we want when they can be extrinsically labeled as 'just' or 'moderate'. The crucial point is that this concession only makes sense if there is *already in play* an underlying distinction between merely doing e.g. just deeds, on the one hand, and just deeds done justly (i.e. from a just character). We attribute all the goodness we want only to the latter, whereas the former (the mere outcomes) fail to give us all we want. Accordingly, by making this important concession, Aristotle can also derive the gist of his solution to the *aporia*, according to which there can be just deeds without yet being an agent in full possession of justice. This conceded disanalogy too helps Aristotle make the main case, and thus the initial *aporia* can once more be dismissed.

Accordingly, it seems to me that Aristotle's argument thus far has something of the form of '*p* implies *q*, not-*p* implies *q*: therefore *q*'. That is to say: 'the analogy gives me the desired point, the disanalogy gives me the desired point: therefore, I am entitled to the desired point.' This may give the false impression that Aristotle is

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agent: for how could they have such implication if, strictly speaking, these 'things' are not even *moderate* or *just*? I find Grant's interpretation unconvincing. Aristotle evidently thinks that merely getting just things done is no proof of the possession of justice, not because it cannot be characterised as 'moderate', 'just', etc., but rather because, although it can be so characterised, there are (as he claims in T3) further conditions internal to the agent performing these actions that need to be fulfilled in order *for the agent* to count as just or moderate.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Hutchinson (1986, pp. 90–91); Irwin (1999, p. 195); Taylor (2006, p. 83). These scholars suppose that in order for something to count as having 'artistic merit' you needed the knowledge condition. Hence, on this interpretation, you need the knowledge condition in order for something to count as a *just* or *moderate* deed too. It is now supposed that Aristotle's point in T2 is merely to point out that in order for these deeds to count as done *justly* or *moderately* and thus to imply the possession of character you need *further inward conditions* besides the knowledge condition. This contributes to the initial analogical argument simply because the distinction between the knowledge condition and such further inward conditions (acting from rational choice and full possession of character) is perfectly adequate to account for the distinction between 'the just, etc. deed' and 'the just, etc. deed done justly'. The just deed is done with the relevant knowledge, and is the one involved in habituation; the just deed done justly requires further inward conditions and it is the one arising from virtuous character. It should be clear by now that I reject this reading. The knowledge condition is not needed in order for something to count as a *just* or *moderate* deed or outcome. Moreover, this reading flagrantly ignores the significance of the evaluative disanalogy, and also misinterprets the initial distinction between (i) artifacts and (ii) bringing them about in a skillful way that is the basis of the analogy – what can now be the basis of *this* distinction, if the knowledge condition applies *equally to both*?

merely interested in the result ( $q$ ), but I also think he wants to maintain both  $p$  and not- $p$ , that is, both the initial analogy and the disanalogy. There is in fact the obvious parallel between artifacts and moral 'F-outcomes' on the one hand: because they do not imply the possession of the F-skill or F-moral character, they can be involved in the relevant processes of learning and habituation. Nonetheless, by contrast with artifacts, mere outcomes or deeds fail to give us all we want in the moral domain, and we only get this when such deeds are the exercise of moral agency. As I have tried to argue, this new disanalogy is important in its own right, but it also helps to dissolve the *aporia* – without contradicting the first analogy, strictly speaking.

Now, because Aristotle takes our fundamental disanalogy seriously, and because conceding this disanalogy presupposes a distinction between merely doing e.g. just deeds and just deeds done justly, I think that Aristotle's three inward conditions for acting virtuously (in T2) should now be regarded in a light different to the usual 'aggregative' one. Suppose the action I did yesterday at the party can be appropriately described as 'refusing to eat an enormous chocolate cake'. Firstly, for the action to be done temperately, it must be carried out by myself in full knowledge that what I am refusing is merely to eat an enormous cake, and not for example, a poisoned cake; for otherwise my action would not be a recognisably temperate action (this is the knowledge condition). Secondly, my action must be the result of *προαίρεσις*, a considered judgement to the effect that refusing to eat an enormous cake is, overall, good conduct, and moreover, good conduct *qua* refusing to eat it, as opposed, for example, to *qua* pleasing my girlfriend by so acting. It is easy to see that my action would not be a recognisably temperate action if this condition were not fulfilled (this is the *προαίρεσις* condition). And thirdly, Aristotle also believes that, for the action to be fully good, it must be carried out from a firm and unchanging temperate disposition, that is to say, a firm and unchanging disposition to act in this way whenever it is required (call this the 'stability condition').

Once we have noticed the evaluative disanalogy and decided to integrate it to the whole argument, these inward conditions of acting from virtue acquire a whole new significance: they become conditions for the goodness of a given deed, not (merely), as in the parallel case inspired by skillful activity, for inferring the presence of moral character in the agent. I suspect that the implicit message that Aristotle now wants to convey is that the deed is *better* the more it is the result of moral agency according to the stipulated inward conditions.

Somehow incidentally, let me notice that it is not difficult to see why someone *could* think, on the basis of these inward conditions, that moral virtues are good merely due to their being reliably or 'non-accidentally' productive of 'moral outcomes'. Someone who fulfils these conditions is much more likely to act e.g. temperately when the occasion arises, than someone who does not fulfil them. Take for instance the voluntariness condition. If you were *forced* to refrain from eating the cake, even if such refusal happens to be the right thing to do in the circumstances, there is no guarantee that you would have willingly refused to eat in the absence of any constraining factors (in fact, quite the opposite). Again, take the *προαίρεσις* condition. Aristotle himself recognises that if you pursue or choose A for the sake of Z, then, strictly speaking, you pursue or choose Z, not A: you pursue or choose A

only *accidentally* (EN 1151a35-b2). So even if A (e.g. refusing to eat the cake) happens to be the right action, there is no guarantee that you would still have done A if A *had not* been instrumentally connected with Z (e.g. pleasing your girlfriend). This does not occur to someone who chooses A for its own sake. Finally, take the stability condition. Even if you chose to refrain from eating the cake in full knowledge of the relevant facts and for its own sake, you are clearly not a reliably producer of ‘temperate outcomes’ if such choice is not deeply ingrained in your character: it may well be the case that this is the only right choice you have made and will ever make in your life. Accordingly, there is some attractiveness to the skill-based or consequentialist interpretation of the nobility we attribute to acting from virtue.

Now clearly, if you have the Aggregative Reading, you might fail to see that Aristotle is emphatically rejecting this picture of moral agency in our chapter. If we are to take seriously the evaluative disanalogy introduced by T2, Aristotle is clearly implying that these inward conditions of moral agency *give us all that we want in terms of the action’s goodness*. This in turn implies that the conditions in question are what *constitutes* this goodness, at least partially: if the action extrinsically described had not issued in accordance with these conditions, it would have been less good, or perhaps not good at all. Therefore, the goodness of moral virtue must be partly *intrinsic* and cannot fully derive from its reliability to produce ‘moral outcomes’ independently established as fully good, for no ‘moral outcome’ can be established as fully good in the first place. This is an important result in its own right.

## 10.5 Such as the Just or Moderate Person would Do Them

The final, logically independent claim, developed in T3, is that these further internal conditions for acting from moral virtue come about (at least partly) *through* the repeated performance of the relevant deeds. Let me now quote the full passage:

[T3] And when it is a matter of the possession (τὸ ἔχειν) of skills, these conditions do not count, except for knowledge itself; but when it comes to the possession of the moral virtues, knowledge has a small or no significance, whereas the force of the other conditions is no small thing but counts for everything, and these indeed result from the repeated performance of just and moderate things. So things done are called just and moderate (πράγματα δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα λέγεται) whenever they are such that the just person or the moderate person would do them; whereas a person is not just and moderate because he does these things, but also because he does them in the way in which just and moderate people do them [i.e. according to the conditions just described]. Therefore, it is right to say that one comes to be a just person from doing just things and moderate from doing moderate things. EN 1105a33-b10.

The claim that full possession of moral virtue comes about through the repeated performance of the relevant deeds is not new, of course: it is the habituation claim. What the previous arguments have shown is that it is now possible to make such a claim without any trace of paradox, because we have now been forced (because of

the evaluative disanalogy) to identify a class of deeds that are ‘morally significant’ but do not already imply the possession of character. According to my interpretation, Aristotle’s argument has subtly shown that this class of deeds can fulfill increasingly demanding and robust conditions leading to full possession of character but not yet entailing it: there is a sense in which they can be the outcome of chance, or they can be brought about with the relevant knowledge but someone else’s knowledge (as in instruction), or they can be brought about with the agent’s own knowledge, and perhaps they can even be prompted by the deliberated choice of the *instructor*. At least in principle all these deeds can now serve to habituate the agent by means of their repeated performance.

But now notice that Aristotle needs to make sense of our ability to *identify* these deeds as ‘just things’ or ‘moderate things’ in the first place (recall the awkwardness noted before). Furthermore, he has also incurred a related explanatory debt: how to make sense of the identity claim, given that deeds involved in moral habituation do not have the same causal conditions as the ones manifested by full possession of character, nor the same value. Aristotle’s final position is spelt out at 1105b5–9, and it is partly meant, I think, to dispel these doubts. Deeds are *called* (λέγεται) just, etc. when they are deeds *such as* just people do; whereas the just person *is* (ἐστίν) not merely one who does just deeds but one who does them on the basis of the stated inward conditions. If I gave the money back to the person I owed it to thinking that the envelope contains a love-letter, Aristotle can now say that such a deed can at least be *called* ‘just’, presumably because it can be recognised by a virtuous agent as the sort of thing that *he* would perform voluntarily and from character if he was in my shoes. The recognition of a deed by the virtuous agent as the sort of thing he would do from character provides us with the relevant identification, and also provides the identity claim with the right content: all F-deeds, whether involved in the process of habituation or fully manifesting virtue, have this recognition as a common denominator.

Somehow incidentally, notice that perhaps the contrast between *calling* deeds ‘just’ or ‘moderate’ and agents *being* just or moderate, is meant to convey the idea that the former are not in reality *good*. If this is the case, the evaluative dissimilarity between virtue and skills is even more profound than I have suggested, for it would entail that any deed or outcome that is independent of the conditions of moral agency, instead of merely failing to give us all we want in terms of moral worth, gives us *nothing* in these terms. Furthermore, if this were the case, the conditions of moral agency would not only ‘contribute’ to the moral goodness of a given deed or outcome: they would fully determine such goodness. It seems to me that Aristotle’s contrast between *calling* deeds ‘just’, ‘moderate’, etc., and the agent’s *being* just, moderate, etc., might well suggest this more profound dissimilarity.

Another relevant point is that Aristotle’s argument must be supplemented as follows. According to my interpretation of *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4, deeds or outcomes that are the mere result of *chance* and those that are the result of instruction fall under the same category: mere *F* outcomes. Aristotle’s point here in this chapter is certainly that deeds performed as a result of instruction do not reflect the possession of skill or character by the tutee, but rather the one by the tutor. Still, these

actions are typically *voluntary*, whereas practical outcomes or artifacts that result *from chance* are not voluntary. *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4, however, must implicitly distinguish between the voluntary, morally significant actions performed under the direction of a tutor, and those states of affairs that are the outcome of chance, because part of the *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4 argument is that the most important of the conditions for acting from virtue (i.e. being able to act from rational choice and a stable character) *come about* through the frequent doing of ‘just things’ or, ‘moderate things’, and these frequent doings clearly do not include outcomes that are the result of chance.

There is nonetheless a solution to this problem. The *Nicomachean Ethics* II 4 implicit distinction between voluntary actions and involuntary deeds, is explicitly drawn by *Nicomachean Ethics* V (1135a19–23),<sup>15</sup> where Aristotle distinguishes between doing an *unjust act* (ἄδικημα) which is voluntary by definition, and doing *something unjust* (τι ἄδικον), which is not voluntary. In order to solve the *aporia* about becoming a virtuous agent, it was enough for Aristotle to show that one could do ‘just things’ or ‘moderate things’ without being in possession of just or moderate character. But the implicit distinction between doing an *unjust act* and doing *something unjust* is important because, in the process of acquiring an unjust character through habituation, the would-be moral agent is required to perform unjust acts voluntarily<sup>16</sup> in such a way that this performance is neither governed by chance (as in the doing of something unjust) nor implies that he is already in possession of an unjust character (as in doing something unjust in a certain way).

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<sup>15</sup> See also *Rh.* 1374a9–17 and *EN* 1136a1–4.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *EN* 1113b26–7, 1114a12–16.

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# Chapter 11

## To Be Handled with Care: Alexander on Nature as a Passive Power



Jorge Mittelmann

**Abstract** Alexander's comments on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* often uncover fruitful doctrinal tensions that help deepen our understanding of some Peripatetic tenets, by disclosing implications that would otherwise lay hidden. Nowhere else does this become clearer than in Alexander's exposition of the several meanings of δύνάμις laid down by Aristotle in his philosophical lexicon (*Metaphysics* Δ chapter 12). The point discussed therein is of the utmost importance: it concerns the well-known divide between active and passive capacities, whose joint (and mutually dependent) activation brings about change, that most basic feature of the physical world. The cleavage between these two kinds of power seems clear-cut. There are, however, some borderline cases that call into question their subsumption under any of those major (and purportedly all-inclusive) headings. The problem that troubles Alexander concerns the way *soul* and *nature* fit into this global picture of capacities and the right way in which to think of them as *causal* powers. After presenting the general account of Aristotelian δυνάμεις, the paper outlines two mutually related questions Alexander raises about them, both of which call for careful consideration, since they seem to give a wrong picture of φύσις. The paper concludes by dispelling doubts and by highlighting some presuppositions that may explain the difficulties Alexander finds in Aristotle's account.

### 11.1 The Account of Self-Motion and the Unity of Self-Movers

In *Metaphysics* Δ 12, Aristotle puts forth his definition of δύνάμις as a principle of the changes that take place (*a*) either in a thing that differs from the one which has the power to produce them, or (*b*) in that very same thing, but considered differently (that is, not as endowed with the power to bring about change, but rather as displaying the correlative ability to undergo the change in question). According to this

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picture, powers always come in pairs: productive capacities lying within natural things are matched by some passive counterparts which are found elsewhere in nature, in such a way that it is only through their joint activation that ordinary changes (such as healing, getting colder or changing color) come about.<sup>1</sup> The standard case is (a) above, since carrying the source of a given type of change within oneself does not entail enjoying the passive power to undergo that very same process. As both types of principle do not usually coincide in the same subject, not every agent is in the position to affect itself *qua* other. Fire has the power to heat other things up, but this power is in no way self-directed – as would be the case if fire could heat itself up, or a mason engage in a self-building action aimed at building himself, albeit considered *qua* other. To this extent, the qualification ‘*qua* other’ seems tailor-made to meet the potential counter-example of the self-healing doctor,<sup>2</sup> who cures himself through a productive power whose usual outcome is an improvement in the condition of someone else’s body and not his own. Medicine (like heat) is an essentially productive, other-directed, power that reaches fulfillment in some external patient; but (unlike heat) the therapeutic craft may be found in the same subject that is acted upon and stands in need of being healed. When this happens, agent and patient turn out to be ‘coincidentally one’,<sup>3</sup> in a way that seemingly dissolves the exclusive disjunction opposing *external and productive* principles of change to *internal and pathetic* principles of undergoing change. To the point that Aristotle likens the workings of nature to the self-directed action of a doctor who cures himself: ‘nature is like that’ (τούτω γὰρ ὅμοιον ἡ φύσις, *Ph.* II 8.199b30–32).

As we will see, Alexander is concerned about the consequences that the blurring of these interconnected distinctions may have for a sound Aristotelian understanding of self-movers. He points out that by ‘principle’ of change Aristotle means ‘its cause’, and suggests that the addition of the word μεταβολή to the *definiens* is needed to make room, in the general account of powers, for the ability to produce changes whose outcome is not a movement, but a state of rest. (*Rest* can be an externally induced change of state, but such a μεταβολή could hardly count as a *kinesis*, since it brings *kinesis* to an end: see 389.4–7).<sup>4</sup>

Most cases of productive powers or capacities that Aristotle has in mind share a feature that sets them apart from their passive counter-parts: they all reside in a numerically different thing from the one whose change they bring about. Principles of *undergoing* change (on the other hand) always lie within the thing that goes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Metaph.* IX 5.1048a1–9; *Ph.* VIII 4.255a34–255b5; *GC* I 7.324b7–9.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander presents the coincidental unity of agent and patient in the same individual as the rationale for the addition of the words ἢ ἢ ἕτερον to the formula of δύναμις (see 389.6: διὰ τοῦτο προσέθηκε; 389.17–18).

<sup>3</sup>*Metaph.* Δ 16.1015b16–36; 9.1017b26–1018a3; cf. *Top.* I 7 (*passim*).

<sup>4</sup>Aristotle had already made clear (at 1019a34–35; cf. 1049b8) that the agent bringing something else to a standstill counts as a genuine principle of change, and thus qualifies as a δυνατόν according to the first meaning of δύναμις. Kirwan’s (1993) translation of this line (‘for what can keep a thing the same is in a way also capable’) seems to slightly obscure this point.

through the μεταβολή (389.26–28). The general picture is laid down in *Metaphysics* Θ 1, where two numerically different abilities are singled out and allocated to different subjects:

Obviously, then, in a sense the potentiality of acting and of being acted on is one (for a thing may be capable (δυνατόν) either because it can be acted on or because something else can be acted on by it), but in a sense the potentialities are different. (i) For the one is in the thing acted on (ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ πάσχοντι); it is because it contains a certain motive principle, and because even the matter is a motive principle, that the thing acted on is acted on, one thing by one, another by another (ἄλλο ὑπ' ἄλλου); for that which is oily is inflammable, and that which yields in a particular way can be crushed; and similarly in all other cases. (ii) But the other potentiality is in the agent (ἡ δ' ἐν τῷ ποιοῦντι), e.g. heat and the art of building are present, one in that which can produce heat and the other in the man who can build. – And so, in so far as a thing is an organic unity (ἧ συμπέφυκεν), it cannot be acted on by itself (ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ); for it is one and not two different things (ἐν γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο). (Aristotle (1957), 1046 a19–29; Revised Oxford Translation).

In the last few sentences, numerical diversity of agent and patient is outlined as a necessary condition for the latter to be acted upon by the former, thereby triggering an actual process of healing or building. Where such a duality is missing –due to the lack of a correlative agent within range, or of an internal difference allowing a single subject to act upon itself *qua* other–, the ability to suffer change (thereby becoming hot, red or cold) will remain idle. Nature is so tightly organized that, if matching powers meet under the right circumstances (καὶ πότε καὶ πῶς) and no external hindrance gets in their way, the expected result comes about of necessity.<sup>5</sup> But since natural things are continuous with themselves and cannot be split-up into two numerically different principles, it may seem that such things are unable to set themselves in motion ‘from within’. For, in order to make anything change, at least *two* principles of motion must concur, a difference that cannot be obtained in natural compounds, precisely insofar as they are natural (ἧ συμπέφυκεν): nothing can be acted upon by itself (ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ), and this may seem to preclude internally induced changes whose origin lie in the soul –unless we are prepared to grant that the soul is ‘other than’ the body.

Given that neither the matter nor the form of a concrete hylomorphic compound are self-standing individuals, the required numerical difference of agent and patient is hardly achieved by merely granting the conceptual distinction between formal and material aspects of *one and the same* thing. As Aristotle himself asserted, ‘we can dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as though we were to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter’ (412b6–9).<sup>6</sup> Now, it is precisely a robust disjunctive picture of soul and body that seems required to account for self-motion, since it would provide numerically distinct agents and patients, relating to each other as required to bring about vital changes in the animal. This explanatory advantage would no doubt come at a high cost: that of turning animal locomotion

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Metaph.* IX 5.1048a5–7; *Ph.* VIII 4.255a34–255b1.

<sup>6</sup> For a defense of the anti-dualist implications of Aristotelian hylomorphism running roughly along these lines, see M. Nussbaum (1984); M. Nussbaum and H. Putnam (1992).

into the action of one thing (the animal's soul) upon *another* (its own body), a move that seems to conflict with natural things being 'one and not two different things' (ἐν γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο) (1046a29).<sup>7</sup>

This tension between the hylomorphic unity of the ensouled being, and the agent-patient duality required for locomotion, provides Alexander with his starting-point. He took the 'other-directed' character of productive δυνάμεις as a definitional feature, and so found it difficult to square *productive powers* with *natures*, which (notoriously) do *not* lie outside the things they set in motion. This may explain Alexander's leaning towards understanding nature (φύσις) in a mostly passive way, in order to do justice to its character as an *inborn* principle of change, while taking souls as other-directed powers modeled mainly on the analogy with crafts. As a consequence, the soul and its causal powers (nutritive, perceptive and the like) run the risk of being left out of the living being's nature.

Alexander took his cue from some Aristotelian instances of (transitive) production that he took very seriously: commenting on the art of housebuilding – which Δ 12 described as 'a capacity which does not belong to the thing being built', but to its builder (1019a16–17)– Alexander stressed the necessity of a numerical difference between agent and patient. On pain of allowing a thing to be *causa sui*, the correlative powers involved in a building process could never belong to one and the same subject:

Such is the productive capacity, which is not in the thing that is moved and comes to be (for nothing makes itself), but in another thing, for the capacity to make a house is in the builder, not in the house being built. Since the maker is distinct from what is being made (κεχώρισται τὸ ποιοῦν τοῦ ποιουμένου) and the productive capacity is in the maker (ἐν τῷ ποιοῦντι), it must necessarily be in another thing and not in the thing being made (ἐν ἑτέρῳ ... καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῷ ποιομένῳ) (Alexander (1891, 389.9–13). Dooleys' (1993) translation).

Alexander is of course prepared to deal (along sober Aristotelian lines) with the case of the doctor who cures himself. This borderline case does not call into question the

<sup>7</sup>A similar conclusion can be gathered from *Physics* VIII 4, a chapter that sheds some light on the meaning of the expression ἡ συμπεφυκεν in our passage from *Metaphysics* Θ 1 (1046a28). In *Physics* Aristotle is directly concerned with naturally continuous magnitudes (συνεχές τι καὶ συμφύες, 255a12) and their inability to move themselves 'from within', since they cannot be analyzed into an inner moving principle and an extended moved body. The four simple bodies lack the internal difference of agent and patient that would allow them to be moved by themselves (αὐτὰ ὑφ' αὐτῶν). In spelling out their lack of inner structure, Aristotle made abundant use of the adjective συμφύες. So it makes sense to suppose that, when he claims in the *Metaph.* that nothing can be affected by itself to the extent that it is one by σύμφυσις (ἡ συμπεφυκεν), Aristotle hints at the kind of unity that simple bodies display, and that any natural compound must realize to a certain extent. I take it that 'connatural union' is put forth in the *Metaphysics* as a general constraint on *any* natural being, in so far as it is natural (ἡ συμπεφυκεν), and not as a peculiar feature of simple bodies alone. Giving this qualification full scope allows one to see why 'this passage seems to make deep troubles for the idea of natural beings as self-movers', as Johansen claimed (2012, p. 87). Perhaps with an eye to this physical background, Johansen prefers to render ἡ συμπεφυκεν by 'in so far as a thing shares the same nature'. On the contrary, the Revised Oxford Translation gave pride of place to the biological cases of 'organic unity' (*sic*, 1046a28). On being one by σύμφυσις, see also *Metaph.* Δ 4.1014b20–26; Bonitz, 719b.20ff.

clear-cut distinction between *bringing about change* and *undergoing* it, nor does it turn medicine itself into a self-directed power. Rather, this essentially other-directed power<sup>8</sup> admits of an unusual reflective application to its bearer, who then acts upon itself as it usually does on any *other* body. To act upon oneself ‘*qua* other’ amounts precisely to this. As already noted, the whole point of this qualification is to make clear that the other-directed nature of the therapeutic craft is preserved even under this strained application, ‘for to be a physician is not the same as being a sick man undergoing treatment’ (389.17–18). The joint activation of the therapeutic craft and of the passive ability to recover from illness takes place in the usual way, except that both (numerically different) abilities happen to coincide in the same individual.

One should probably bear in mind the physical model of teaching and learning –or of perceiving and being perceived–, which appeals to *two* different powers located in *two* different subjects in order to account for one and the same process of instruction (or for one and the same perceptual event).<sup>9</sup> There is no need to assume that this numerical difference is wiped out when agent and patient happen to be one and the same individual: it is enough to think of this single subject as grounding both correlative δυνάμεις (productive and pathetic) in different aspects of itself. The categorical bases of those powers (so to speak) need not merge into each other in order to account for their coincidental unity in a single subject. Furthermore, in considering similar cases Aristotle ruled out the conceptual conflation of teaching and learning, thus preventing us from inferring a self-instructing teacher (or a self-heating fire) from the necessary co-occurrence of ‘producing’ and ‘being produced’ in a single event, bound by the same starting and end-points.<sup>10</sup> In short, extensional identity of end-points does not license the conflation of co-occurring processes.

This fact is significant because it alludes to the difference between agent and patient that still remains even within the self-affecting thing: although both coincide to the point of being ‘one in number’, the processes of healing and being healed remain ‘different in being’ and are grounded in numerically different abilities. According to at least one plausible account of Aristotle’s fourfold categorical scheme (*Cat.* 1a20–b9), the standard medical case displays two different *tokens* of two different *types*: someone’s power to impart health (a concrete instance of the Universal Therapeutic Craft) is exerted upon some diseased body, which in turn displays the passive ability to recover from illness (a particular token of the corresponding Universal capacity).<sup>11</sup>

As we will see shortly below, Alexander holds on to this dualistic picture of the powers jointly activated during a process of self-affection. He takes this dual struc-

<sup>8</sup>For the notion of ‘externally-directed powers’, see M. Tuozzo (2011).

<sup>9</sup>*Ph.* III 3.202a21–202b22; *de An.* III 2.425b26–426 a 27.

<sup>10</sup>*Ph.* III 3.202b14–22.

<sup>11</sup>The medical knowledge of a particular physician can be likened to the (piece of) grammatical skill which ‘is in a subject, the soul, but is not said of any subject’ (*Cat.* I a25–28), whereas its universal type (which can be shared by a manifold of competent physicians) is akin to knowledge-of-grammar as such (the general ability to speak and write in a given language). Symmetrical distinctions hold of the passive ability to recover from illness.

ture as raising a serious challenge to the hylomorphic unity of the ensouled self-movers, and hesitates between the inner character of *natures* and the other-directed powers that *souls* exert upon their bodies. Insofar as the soul ‘is other (ἐτέρα) than the body that is being moved’ (390.32), it falls short from the closeness that is expected to hold between a thing and its own nature. It therefore becomes tempting to think of the soul as a *user* and of the body as its locomotive *tool*, taking one’s lead from the otherness any user enjoys with regard to its instruments (this latter being a feature that, according to Aristotle, belongs *per se* to the user/tool relationship as such).<sup>12</sup>

## 11.2 Inner Principles of Motion as Abilities to *Suffer* Change

In his commentary to Δ 12, Alexander raises two important and interrelated questions.

- (1) The first concerns the point outlined above: there are cases where some typically other-directed principles of motion (such as certain crafts) work as intrinsic causes of change, a fact which brings them closer to φύσις, since the latter is a source of motion and rest that lies *within* the very thing that changes, and then *qua* itself and not *qua* other (*Ph.* 192b12–15, 20–27).<sup>13</sup> Alexander worries that Aristotle includes among productive powers the ability to walk and the ability to talk, which (unlike regular ποιητικαὶ δυνάμεις) work as *internal* sources of self-induced change – that is, changes resulting from a principle which lies within the agent herself. Rule-guided production and bodily movement governed by choice are ‘spontaneous’ activities, so that both those who decide to take a walk (οἱ βαδίζοντες), and those who indulge in cooking or building, are not constrained to do so, but are moved from within in the way *nature* does (κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς δύναμιν). The internal starting-point of their behavior is to be found (respectively) in the locomotive ability and in the technical skill inhabiting the agent’s soul.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Or so it seems to follow from *Juv.* 469b1–3, where Aristotle builds upon *Alc. I* 129c–130d. N. Denyer (2001, pp. 213–214, *ad* 129d4–5) points out that the parallelism holding between the tools of the trade and the hands of the cobbler ‘soon leads to the idea that we may talk of bodily parts themselves as tools or ὄργανα’. This way of talking is fully endorsed by Aristotle, who is happy to see animal bodies as ὄργανα of their souls: cf. *de An.* II 4.415b18–20; *PA I* 1.642a10–13, 645b16–17; *Protr.* B 8; B 23 (Düring (1969). On the instrumental nature of the body, especially see Menn (2002). I have discussed these issues at length in Mittelmann (2013).

<sup>13</sup>As Fernández and Mittelmann (2017, p. 156, note 38) have claimed, ‘[w]hen it comes to natural *dunameis* and causal powers embodied in organic bodies, those bodies themselves provide the matter that gets acted upon by the souls they embody’.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Alexander (1887), *De anima* 23.15–24 (on the nautical skill as a moving principle); 79.17–20 (on the art of dancing as the inner source of the dancer’s motions).

Aristotle pointed out that we sometimes apply the word *δυνατόν* not merely to someone who is able to carry out a certain action (viz. to talk; to walk), but to someone who can perform it in a successful manner and according to her own choice (1019a23–26; cf. 390.1–8). So, Alexander argues, if someone is forcibly carried to a certain place against her own will, we would not say that she arrived there by displaying an active power of her own, as we would if she had happened to be there as a result of unconstrained deliberation (τὸν μὲν ἐλθόντα που κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν ἀπὸ δυνάμεως τοῦτο οἰκείας φαμέν πεποιηκέναι, 390.5–7).<sup>15</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*, someone who decides to take a walk does not act upon herself ‘*qua* other’ either, as if the stroller’s body were compelled to wander by an inner active self, ruling over it: lifting an arm is not the same kind of other-directed behavior as lifting a box from the ground. But if the same *δύναμις* is claimed to be the source of these two motions –the first being a self-directed, the second an other-directed, change of place– it starts to look as if self-motion might be analyzed along the usual lines: as a thing (the body) being acted upon by *another* (its soul). To the extent that they are seen as ‘productive’, some of those inner sources of change will be essentially other-directed (in the way heat or medicine is), which threatens to undermine the unity of self-movers by rendering self-motion akin to an externally prompted change.

By way of this analytic parallelism, all ensouled bodies would collapse into accidental movers, split-up (so to speak) into a moving soul and a moved body which is acted upon *qua* other (and not *qua* itself as a fully ensouled being). This concern is voiced by Alexander in a passage where he puts forth the *inner* character of locomotive abilities that renders them *unlike* productive powers:

If the productive capacity is a principle of movement and change in another thing or in the same thing *qua* other, how could it include those who walk in virtue of the capacity *in* them, or those who speak in virtue of the choice *in* them? For these people seem to move in virtue of a principle of movement that is within themselves (δοκοῦσι γὰρ οὗτοι κινεῖσθαι κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀρχὴν τῆς κινήσεως). Indeed, both art and choice, which are principles [of movement], are *in* those who initiate movement in virtue of them (ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς κατὰ ταύτας κινουμένοις) (Alexander (1891), 390.10–16; Dooley’s (1993) translation. Italics are his).

Note that Alexander seems to assume here that the internal character of the moving principle counts as *prima facie* evidence against it being a genuine *productive* power, given that anything set in motion by a power of this sort is moved from without, by something else. This presupposition goes unquestioned throughout Alexander’s discussion of Aristotelian powers. Since any locomotive power is an other-directed ability to impart bodily movement, the elementary cases of self-motion (issuing out of choice and concerning one’s own body) seem difficult to subsume under Aristotle’s *definiens* of a productive power, unless one is willing to give up the internal unity of self-movers.<sup>16</sup> Aristotle himself *could* be thought to have taken a step in this latter direction, by drawing a disturbing analogy between

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ph.* VIII 4.255a8–9.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander concerns himself with this difficult subsumption in 390.11–12: πῶς ὑπάγουντο ἂν ταύτῃ τῇ δυνάμει.



ships and self-movers and claiming that in both cases the moving principle and the moved thing are different and mutually related entities (διηρημένον τὸ κινοῦν καὶ κινούμενον, *Ph.* VIII 4.254b30–33).<sup>17</sup>

- (2) But the second and more pressing issue Alexander addresses concerns nature itself as a source of change and as a peculiar kind of δύναμις. In *Metaphysics* IX 8 Aristotle had stated that ‘φύσις too is in the same genus as δύναμις, for it is a principle of movement’ –just as any other δύναμις is– albeit ‘not in another but in the thing itself *qua* itself’ (ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ ἀλλ’ ἐν αὐτῷ ἢ αὐτό, 1049b10). Therefore, it makes sense to ask which kind of δύναμις (productive or pathetic) Aristotle has in mind when he considers nature from the standpoint of its causal contribution to a thing’s distinctive behavior. Alexander goes on to ask:

But one might raise this question: Since nature too is a kind of capacity, under which of the senses [of capacity] that have been mentioned would it be included? If *nature* is in fact a principle of movement in the thing itself, it would be included under passive capacity (εἴη ἂν ὑπὸ τὴν παθητικὴν δύναμιν), for things having a nature have the capacity to be moved by another, as Aristotle showed in the *Physics* [2.1]. *The soul, on the other hand*, would come under the productive capacity (τῇ ποιητικῇ δυνάμει), for it is in another or in the same thing *qua* other, for one who moves in virtue of his soul is somewhat similar to the physician who cures himself; for the soul, in virtue of which one who is walking moves, is other than the body that is being moved. (Alexander (1891), 390.26–33, Dooley’s (1993) translation, my italics).<sup>18</sup>

To say the least, Alexander commits himself here to a bold set of claims. The inference from the internal ‘location’ of the moving principle (ἐν αὐτῷ) to its merely passive character (παθητικὴ) is probably grounded on Aristotle’s ponderings about ‘φύσις-*qua*-matter’,<sup>19</sup> that all-encompassing feature of φύσις that becomes salient in artifacts (such as beds or cloaks, 192b16) whose sole ‘innate tendency to change’ lies within the stuff they are made of (192b18–23). Since beds and cloaks *as such* lack any active principle to bring about change –either in themselves or in something else– their ‘innate tendency to change’ amounts to an innate tendency *to be changed* (τοῦ κινεῖσθαι), that belongs not so much to they themselves as to their materials (192b19–20).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Graham’s translation understates the point by downplaying the strength of the participle διηρημένον (‘distinct’), whose full meaning is disclosed in the next paragraph (at 255a14), where Aristotle states the conditions under which a full-fledged duality of agent and patient obtains: ‘For in so far as a thing is one and continuous not by contact, it does not suffer change; but it is in so far as it is divided (ἢ κεχώρισται) that one part naturally acts, the other is acted upon’ (*Ph.* VIII 4.255a12–15). The infinitive διηρηῖσθαι reappears in the next line (a16), to describe the relation that holds between the moving principle and the moved body within one and the same self-mover.

<sup>18</sup> Reference to 2.1 has been added by Dooley (1993), following Hayduck’s 1891 apparatus.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ph.* II 1.192b16–23, 193a9–30.

<sup>20</sup> The fact that those materials themselves are close to elemental stuff (‘stone, earth or a mixture of the two’, 192b19–20) largely explains that their inner tendency to change is not to produce it, but rather to undergo it: cf. VIII 4.255b29–31.

But this is far from being the only meaning of φύσις that Aristotle recognized in *Physics* II.1: form is φύσις even to a greater extent than matter is (193b6–7). As we depart from artifacts and enter the realm of unmanufactured things that replicate themselves through generation, *nature* sides with *active* powers that bring about change, both in oneself and in another (more on this below). This active feature of φύσις is singled out already in the *Physics* (193b8–12) but is fully developed in *De Anima*, where the ability to replicate one's own form in another piece of matter is marked out as the most *natural* operation that any living being can undertake (φυσικώτατον). Now, as it is plain, this operation is a fully *productive* one and this is precisely how Aristotle describes it: 'For any living thing that has reached its normal development [...] the most *natural* act is the *production* of another like itself (τὸ ποιῆσαι ἕτερον οἷον αὐτό)' (*de An.* II 4.415a26–28). In this text, φύσις and ποιήσις go hand in hand, a fact which disproves Alexander's equation of nature and pathetic capacities for undergoing change. So, at the other end of the spectrum covered by *Physics* II 1, nature shows itself as an inner tendency to move rather than to be moved, to the point that the full expression of a living being's nature resides in active self-replication, rather than in its liability to suffer change.

Therefore, in pointing to such an inner principle of motion, *nothing has yet been said as to its active or passive character*. Both simple bodies (like fire and earth), and complex organisms (like animals and their parts), fall under the scope of the things that exist by nature (φύσει) in the opening lines of that chapter (192b8–16). Each of these natural things is endowed with an inner source that accounts for their change either of place (movement and rest), size (growth and decay) or quality. As Aristotle recognized, 'even the matter is a motive principle' (cf. 1046a22–26) and thereby it grounds some of those changes, as a proper part of a thing's φύσις.<sup>21</sup> But much more so is the thing's own form, which acts as a productive source of these changes.

A more likely place for the equivalence Alexander draws between φύσεις and 'passive capacities' would perhaps be *Physics* VIII 4, where Aristotle equated the inner principles of motion governing the simple bodies (i.e., their natures) to passive abilities to undergo local changes, and *not* to produce them: fire, water and the like 'do have a source of motion, not of causing motion or of acting on something, but of being acted on' (οὐ τοῦ κινεῖν οὐδὲ τοῦ ποιεῖν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ πάσχειν, 255b30–31). The lightness of fire does not act upon anything else in any way. By being light, fire does not act *upon itself* either, not even *qua* other, as if fire could push itself up until finally reaching its natural location. Lightness is a different sort of power – a passive one – that renders its subject liable to suffer (rather than to produce) a distinctive change of place, and to remain in its proper location upon reaching it. Therefore, if nature is at all a passive δύναμις, it seems that the place to look in order to discover it at work are the four elements, whose continuous and connatural bodies (συνεχές τι καὶ συμφυές, 255a12) do not admit being split-up into an active internal mover

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Metaph.* Δ 4.1014b26–31.

and a passive instrumental body. In short, only at the elemental level do we find the sort of passive δύνάμις Alexander assimilates to Aristotelian natures *tout court*.

The underlying motivation for a dualistic picture of self-agency, of the kind Alexander considers in declaring the soul to be different from the body, may be found in the text of *Metaphysics* Θ 1, quoted in Sect. 11.1 above.<sup>22</sup> Unless we come to see the internal structure of self-movers in the way that is suggested, we will be bound to admit that organic unities cannot be changed ‘from within’, since nothing is acted on by itself (ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ) and the things whose nature is fully one are unable to set themselves in motion, due to the lack of an internal difference between agent and patient: they are not *two* different things but *one* (ἐν γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο). It is therefore crucial to introduce something else, over and above the thing’s own nature, in order to make self-motion possible. Thus, *Physics* VIII 4 (together with *Metaphysics* Θ 1’s veto on natural things affecting themselves ἢ συμπεφύκεν) could have misled Alexander into thinking that nature is mainly associated with the ability to suffer change – an ability which (unlike productive powers) is never found outside the things that do the changing (389.26–28). The more serious consequence of all this is that the animal’s *soul* can no longer be seen as its *nature*, for a thing’s *nature* does not act upon that thing ‘as on another’. To the extent that soul does, it can no longer be deemed a proper part of the animal’s φύσις. Incidentally, Alexander has acknowledged that the moving soul ‘is other than the body that is being moved’ (390.33), a situation that can in turn be likened to the relation that holds between a sailor and his ship (cf. *Ph.* VIII 4.254b30–33).<sup>23</sup>

### 11.3 Overcoming the Dilemma: Bringing About Change Without Changing Oneself

Alexander’s proposal so far achieves a plausible explanation of self-motion only at the cost of a strongly dualistic account of the self-mover, which breaks up into a passive bodily *nature* and an active *soul* or self, interacting with one another as two mutually related entities (the one pathetic, the other productive). It is worth noting, however, that, as it stands, Alexander’s analysis runs against the letter of *Physics* VIII 4, where Aristotle shows himself happily unaware of the dualistic concerns that his account of animal locomotion could raise against hylomorphism. Far from endorsing the chasm between nature and soul, Aristotle sees no conflict in claiming

<sup>22</sup> To my knowledge, only Johansen (2012, pp. 83–89) has seen the full implications of this passage for the account of self-motion. As he rightly points out, ‘this passage seems to make deep troubles for the idea of natural beings as self-movers’ (p. 87), even though difficulties can be overcome by a careful reading of the restrictive qualification ἢ συμπεφύκεν, at 1046a28.

<sup>23</sup> This conclusion becomes all the more troubling when we remember Alexander’s outspoken hostility towards this comparison, and his efforts to read it as being about the nautical art, and not about an actual sailor: cf. Alexander (1887), *De anima* 15.10–15; 23.24–24.3; 79.17–20. On these passages, see also Mittelmann (2013).

that any ensouled being sets itself in motion *by nature* (φύσει), a claim that sheds some doubt on the prospects of casting locomotion in terms of one thing being acted on by *another*.

What is moved by itself (αὐτὸ ὑφ' αὐτοῦ) is moved by nature (φύσει), such as every animal. For an animal is moved by itself, and things which have their source of movement in themselves (ἐν αὐτοῖς) we say are moved by nature. That is why the animal as a whole moves itself by nature (φύσει αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινεῖ); however, its body may be moved both by nature and contrary to nature. For it makes a difference with what sort of movement it happens to be moved and from what elements is composed. (*Ph.* VIII 4.254b14–20. D. Graham's (1999) translation).

So, despite analyzing animal locomotion into the workings of an active mover (τὸ κινούν) upon a passive body (τὸ κινούμενον) that gets acted on by it –instead of been dragged along by some outer mover (cf. 254b24–33)– Aristotle seems prepared to claim that this internal duality does not break up the natural unity of the ensouled self-mover. However far we get in disclosing the inner complexities of this agent/patient structure, Aristotle suggests, we should never lose sight of its dynamic unity ‘as a whole’. What enables us to see animal locomotion as *natural* is the previous recognition of a strong hylomorphic bond that holds together agent and patient within the same single whole, which remains one thing and not two (τὸ ζῷον ὅλον, 254b17). But the fact that Aristotle saw no conflict between the duality of self-motion and the unity of self-movers does not show that there is none. It proves at best that their productive character does not prevent souls from being inner principles of change and full parts of a thing's nature. Arguably, the natures of self-movers are made up of active powers (nutritive, locomotive, perceptive, and so on) that account for a manifold of changes that pertain to them as such (ἢ αὐτά). But how is this compatibilist program to be achieved? And is Aristotle's confidence with regard to the harmless hylomorphic implications of his analysis of self-motion well-founded?

At least some things can be said to dispel the impression of hopeless disagreement. Our problem is roughly akin to the one faced by action theorists concerned with the exclusive disjunction Aristotle draws between action (*praxis*) and production (*poiesis*). Membership in the latter category is granted to all and only those other-directed performances that improve something else's condition, without aiming at improving that of the agent itself. Membership in the former is granted to all and only those actions that improve the agent's moral condition as such, and whose only goal is *praxis* itself (αὐτῇ ἡ εὐπραξία τέλος),<sup>24</sup> rather than its external outcome. Furthermore, in drawing this distinction, Aristotle made clear that no *praxis* is a *poiesis* and no *poiesis* is a *praxis*, so neither of them is the genus (nor a species) of the other (*EN* VI 4.1140a5–6; 5.1140b4–5).

The distinction seems to be in order, were it not for the fact ‘that actions often or always *are* productions and productions often or always *are* actions’, as J. L. Ackrill famously put it: ‘The brave man's action *is* fighting uphill to relieve the garrison, and the just man is paying off his debt *by* mending his neighbor's fence’. The

<sup>24</sup> *EN* VI 5.1140b7.

Aristotelian alternative is thereby challenged, thus making it difficult to claim ‘that paying off a debt is an action but mending a fence is a production’.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, it seems impossible to perform morally relevant actions without keeping some goal in sight beyond the performance of the action itself, a goal that comes about precisely thanks to the action; on the other hand, it is chimeric to isolate a subset of technical productions that in no way affect the agent who performs them.<sup>26</sup> A mechanic who repairs a motor displays an ordered series of other-directed steps whose outcome is the improvement of something utterly different from himself. But just as it is impossible to carry out those productions without improving (or at least preserving) our inner ability to produce them (σωτηρία),<sup>27</sup> so is it impossible to accomplish any production without achieving something more, besides its explicit goal. In short: any other-directed performance counts as a self-realization of the agent that performs it.

This twofold scheme also applies to the powers of the soul, whose other-directed character does not prevent them (*pace* Alexander) from being inner sources of the living being’s self-realization. Nutrition and reproduction are cases in point: any exercise of these powers is a full realization of the living being’s nature, aiming at both preserving its subject precisely as the kind of thing it is (ἢ τοιοῦτον),<sup>28</sup> and at the perpetuation of the natural kind to which this subject belongs. But this self-preserving activity can only be achieved through a chain of other-directed operations that transform incoming food into concocted nutriment (with the aid of innate heat),<sup>29</sup> and then turn nutriment into blood, flesh and other functional parts of the living being’s body. In doing all this, the nutritive soul acts upon the organism it helps to keep alive as an inner source of change, making the body grow *qua* itself and not *qua* other; but it also acts upon the incoming food as one thing acts upon *another*, in the same way that any regular δυνάμις does. Moreover, both deeds are not unrelated: just as moral self-improvement is achieved *by* mending one neighbour’s fence, self-preservation is *not* a further act of the nutritive power, over and above the concoction and digestion of nutriment. Self-realization consists precisely in doing all of this: it is achieved *by* the very acts that turn something else into one-self through concoction and digestion. This general structure, that manages to knit together other-directed δυνάμεις and self-referential φύσεις, has been highlighted by Johansen:

Both nature and *dunamis* [...] are principles of change. The distinguishing feature of nature is that it is a principle of change in the thing itself *qua* itself, while a capacity is a principle of change in another thing or itself *qua* another. But it is possible that the same capacity

<sup>25</sup> J.L. Ackrill (1978, pp. 595–596). This and related problems have been carefully discussed by D. Charles (1986) and C. Natali (2002).

<sup>26</sup> In stating the *aporia*, Charles calls attention to a paradoxical consequence: ‘[T]here will be few, if any, virtuous acts if the agent’s desire to produce some future goal excludes the possibility of his performing a moral praxis’ (1986, p. 120).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *de An.* II 5.417b2–7; 416b16–19.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *de An.* II 4. 416b18–19.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *de An.* II 4.416b27–29.

which changes another thing also thereby acts as a principle of change in the thing that has the capacity *qua* itself, and in that respect the principle is active as the nature of that thing. For example, we may think that in nutrition the nutritive capacity acts as an active capacity [ποιητική δύναμις] on the food, but in so acting the capacity also realizes its role as the nature [φύσις] of the living being that has the principle. (Johansen (2012, p. 86)).

This structure fits within an even broader picture, that concerns the ambiguous categorization of some dual performances, which can be seen either as fulfilments of an *agent*'s power or as changes brought about in the *patient* undergoing them. When seen from the former standpoint, the exercise of someone's building craft amounts to no real change<sup>30</sup> on the part of the craftsman, since he neither loses nor acquires any feature in the process. As Aristotle puts it, 'it would be wrong to speak of a builder as being altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι) when he is using his skill in building a house' (*de An.* II 5.417b8–9). It is the building materials which alter and become a house, thanks to the action of the unchangeable builder who remains unaltered (*qua* builder) throughout the whole process.<sup>31</sup> Now this peculiar feature of crafts allows Aristotle to classify building sometimes as a *kinesis* (an other-directed process whose stages differ from one another and from the process as a whole),<sup>32</sup> and sometimes as an *energeia* (a fulfilment of the agent's craft and its full self-realization as a builder). In making *other* things real (through production) the agent fulfills its own nature (through action). As Kosman has claimed, this inner, self-perfecting, dimension of crafts surfaces as soon as one considers them in a certain light:

[A]ny motion may be thought of as an activity, and [...] this is true of building if one thinks from the point of view of the builder, not as something's development through stages of change into something else, but simply as the realization of her art of building (Kosman (2013, pp. 76–77)).

As we saw in Sect. 11.2 above, Alexander reckoned *craft* and choice (together with the ability to talk and the ability to walk) among the inner principles of movement that lie within 'those who initiate movement in virtue of them' (390.14–16). It was this inner character of locomotive abilities that made him reluctant to line them up with productive capacities setting something else in motion from without. Even rule-guided production aiming at some external goal appeared, under this light, as an internal principle according to which a rational agent determines himself to action, or sets himself in motion from within. Alexander's uneasiness with categorizing crafts under one side of the 'φύσις/δύναμις' divide should give us pause for thought: it points to that self-perfective aspect in the exercise of crafts which brings them closer to inner principles of change, such as the ability to walk. As a result of this analysis, one comes to see that crafts (as origins of change) are twofold: if their more obvious feature concerns the external changes they produce, they can also be seen as determinations of the rational part of the soul, that account for the agent's

<sup>30</sup> Or to a highly unusual one: cf. *de An.* II 5.417b5–16; cf. 416b2–3.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *de An.* II 4.416a34–b3.

<sup>32</sup> *EN* X 4.1174a21–23.

productive behavior. Under this latter consideration, they set their subjects in motion in the same way that nature does.

## 11.4 Concluding Remarks

To sum up, in his commentary on *Metaphysics* Δ 12 Alexander sketches a destructive dilemma that is built upon three moderately unwarranted suppositions:

- (a) If a principle of change resides within the thing undergoing the change (ἐν αὐτῷ), then such a principle is a passive δύναμις, to be conceived along the lines of the natures that account for the motion of the four simple bodies.
- (b) If a principle of change lies outside the thing it sets in motion (ἐν ἄλλῳ), then it is likely to be an active δύναμις that brings about change in the way any craft shapes a suitable piece of matter (that is, a material endowed with the kind of passive δύναμις identified in (a) above).
- (c) The soul turns out to be a problematic item on two accounts: it resides within the changing thing itself (like φύσεις do), but acts upon its body in a productive, craft-like, fashion (for instance, in nutrition and locomotion).

From these premises it seems to follow that the soul moves its body as a doctor cures himself, but that amounts to say: κατὰ συμβεβηκός, as a thing which acts upon itself *qua* other (*Ph.* II.1.192b23–27). To avoid this unwanted conclusion, one may try either to think of souls as *natures* (at the cost of leaving aside their moving power, while retaining their immanent character), or to think of them as fully-fledged *movers* (at the cost of turning them into external, rather than internal, sources of motion).

Aristotle seems to think, however, that (*qua* principles of change) craft-like souls have two interconnected aspects: they change something else (the body), while becoming for the animal as a whole (τὸ ζῷον ὅλον) an inner source of its behavior, its φύσις. Nutrition and reproduction bear witness to this duplicity. Perplexities may be due, to some extent, to the fact that the image of a doctor healing himself—which is supposed to shed light on the way φύσις works upon physical bodies—does double duty in Aristotle's *Ph.* When it enters the scene for the first time (in *Ph.* II 1.192b23–27), it does so as a model of coincidental causation, that may lure us into thinking that nature acts in very much the same way. Accordingly, Aristotle emphasizes therein the differences that stand in the way of such a hasty assimilation. But when the image reappears some chapters later (in *Ph.* II 8.199b30–32), Aristotle seems eager to highlight the coincidences between the doings of nature and those of the doctor who operates upon himself: τοῦτῳ γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ φύσις (199b31–32). These two instances of the example need not be mutually inconsistent, however. I take it that the doctor who heals himself is the closest one can get to the self-referentiality of nature by means of an example that fails to be self-referential in the



appropriate way.<sup>33</sup> Aristotle just wants us to pay attention to the features that unusual medical action shares with the workings of φύσις, without in any way conflating nature with self-referential (although other-directed) technical activities.

When stripped away from the traits it shares with any ordinary medical procedure, the self-healing action makes an *approximate* model available for the workings of nature. For that model to succeed, careful attention must be paid to its relevant features: we must remove the *other-directedness* pertaining to any craft as such, to only retain the unity of agent and patient that *both* self-directed medical acts *and* natural processes –such as nutrition, perception or locomotion– display. Thus, as with any good old-fashioned Aristotelian analogy, the medical comparison must be handled with care.

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<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the differences between both moving principles, ‘when a doctor cures himself this is just about as near to nature as craft can come’: D. Sedley (2010, p. 13).

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# Chapter 12

## Themistius on the Human Intellect



Manuel Correia

**Abstract** This article defines Themistius' exegesis of the human intellect (*Paraphrasis* on Aristotle's *De anima*) as a *prodromic* noetics, that is, a psychology in which the former psychological function is naturally predisposed, as a matter, to the action of the latter one, which acts as a form. This doctrine, which I claim to stem from Plato's *Timaeus*, makes sense of hylomorphism by allowing separate psychological functions both to combine to non-separate ones and to unify cognitive functions and their cognitive objects. At the same time, Themistian exegesis aims at defining the self, which is identified with the active intellect, since this intellect is the ultimate form of this successive *prodromic* interaction. Concluding remarks are intended to give weight to the thesis that Themistius' noetics is an original attempt to recognize and reject two other extreme positions: the one which implies that actual intellect is not human but divine, as Alexander of Aphrodisias claimed; the other advanced by Zeno the Stoic, who held that the lower functions of the human soul are defined as perversions (or adaptive modulations) of the higher one.

### 12.1 Introduction

Themistius' *Paraphrase* on Aristotle's *De anima*<sup>1</sup> is the earliest explanation of this treatise that has survived from antiquity. At the same time, it is the most influential of Themistius' works.<sup>2</sup> In his Introduction to the English translation of this

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth *In de An.* The text has been edited by Ricardus Heinze, in Berlin, 1890, with the title *Themistii in Libros Aristotelis De anima Paraphrasis*, by Academia Litterarum Regiae Borussicae, vol. V, part iii.

<sup>2</sup> In terms of influence, Themistius' *In de An.* is the most influential and widely known of his works. It was translated into Arabic in the Tenth Century and in the 13th was used by Latin Christian commentators and translators. Cf. Schroeder & Todd 1990, 32. For an overview of the use of Moerbeke's Latin translation of the *Paraphrase* and of its availability to Saint Thomas Aquinas, cf. Verbeke, 1973, ix-xxxviii.

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*Paraphrase*, R. Todd<sup>3</sup> has pointed out that Themistius' work was preceded by Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, which did not survive. This makes it unclear whether Themistius made use of Alexander's commentary, although there is evidence<sup>4</sup> that Alexander's *De anima*, a short treatise aimed at reconstructing Aristotle's psychology, was terminologically and doctrinally influential.

The paraphrase is not a commentary, because although it follows the text of Aristotle in an orderly and continuous way, it does not have the literary expression that is characteristic of a commentary. However, Themistius' *In de An.* does not content itself with repeating the same points Aristotle made in his treatise, but contains many interpretative suggestions that enrich the original text. According to Todd,<sup>5</sup> Themistius wrote his *In de An.* in Constantinople (around 345 and 355 AD) as material for his course on Aristotle's philosophy. It seems that his didactic method included several stages, beginning by an elucidation (ἐκκαλύπτειν), which Todd<sup>6</sup> divides into restatement, enlargement and rearrangement of the Greek text of the philosopher. The expositive method also features a reconstruction (συνίστασθαι) of the underlying ideas involved in Aristotle's arguments, which unfolds through an analysis (ἐφιστάναι) of what the philosopher said, aimed at providing a solution (λύσις) to the problems raised therein (ἀπορίαι).<sup>7</sup> As Todd has remarked,<sup>8</sup> the method also includes a general elaboration (ἐξεργάζεσθαι) that brings in a synoptic view of the issue, making productive use of other texts written by Aristotle.

As I take this last part of the method, Themistius could be referring to a doctrinal solution, which is not independent from comparing Aristotle's doctrinal thesis to similar discussions in other authors. In fact, Themistius names many dialogues of Plato, especially numerous passages from the *Timaeus*, as well as other Neoplatonic authors such as Porphyry through whom he seems to be aware of Plotinus' teaching, for some common terminology in Themistius' account of human intellectual operations has been detected.<sup>9</sup> However, Themistius' *In de An.* is by no means a

<sup>3</sup>See his 1996, 1. Throughout this paper, I will rely on Todd's translation and on his comments on the text, making clear where my own interpretation or emphasis depart from his. My expression is sometimes dependent on Todd's translation.

<sup>4</sup>Todd (1996, 1, n.7) points out a list of passages where Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De Anima* has terminological parallels in Themistius' *In de An.* and also passages in which there is evidence of specific influence. Cf. Todd, 1996, 242.

<sup>5</sup>1996, 2.

<sup>6</sup>1996, 4.

<sup>7</sup>On giving solutions to problems, cf. *In de An.* 101. 2 and 108. 10.

<sup>8</sup>1996, 5.

<sup>9</sup>Todd 1996, 2, n. 9.

Neoplatonist exegesis of Aristotle's *De anima*,<sup>10</sup> if only because Themistius refers to Plato himself rather than to some Neoplatonist interpretation of Plato.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, his *In de An.* deserves to be read as a self-contained doctrine which covers a single or general explanation of the human soul. In this paper, which is devoted to the study of the concept of intellect in Themistius' *In de An.* on Aristotle's *de An.*, book 3, Chap. 5 (henceforth *de An.* 3.5), Themistius' work is best interpreted as a general teaching on human intellect. But to tackle such a broad topic far exceeds the scope of this article, in part also because "the complex format of Themistius' exposition [...] makes it difficult to present a synoptic account of his noetics."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my aim will be limited here to reconstructing the relationship between Aristotle's agent and potential intellect. I hold that this traditional construal could be taken as a consistent and reliable view of the human intellectual function.

The view I will argue for is that Themistius defines the nature of the human intellect as a *prodromic* interaction, that is, a relation in which the set of cognitive functions of the human soul is arranged in such a way that each cognitive power acts as material and as a potential source for the one which immediately follows it in the series, this latter being in comparison more active and more formal than the previous one.

Prodromic interaction can be seen as a kind of doctrinal hylomorphism that aims at explaining the self in rational animals and asserts the self-standing character of the human 'active intellect'. It tries to prove that a human being *is* his or her active intellect. As such this doctrine is far from explicit in Aristotle's *De anima*, but it does not contradict his teachings either. One can find a hint of such a view in Plato's *Timaeus*, as I will show later. This textual evidence does not prevent us from believing that Neoplatonists could have taken this idea directly from Plato's *Timaeus*.

Specifically, Themistius argues that the potential intellect (νοῦς δυνάμει) is a precursor state (πρόδρομος: 105. 30–31; 106. 13) of the agent intellect (νοῦς ἐνεργείᾳ) in roughly the same way as the matter is a predisposition to the natural or artistic work to be carried out, for it contains potentially whatever can be made out of it, in a way analogous to that in which marble contains potentially the statue that will be carved out of it.

In general, this *prodromic* relationship is a way to ensure continuity of the whole human cognitive process from sensation to intellection and vice versa, thus securing a cognitive unity both in the object of knowledge and in the knower, by identifying the agent intellect to the self or first formal perfection. The thesis that I defend in

<sup>10</sup> As convincingly suggested by Todd, 1996, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Todd, 1996, 2: 'But any such Neoplatonic elements are not overtly emphasized, and are vastly outweighed by discussions of Platonic texts, notably from the *Timaeus*. If these sometimes indicate an attempt to harmonize Plato with Aristotle <Todd cites *Paraphrase* 106. 29–107. 7 to support this common point in ancient Neoplatonic commentary on Aristotle> this programme is carried out far less elaborately and emphatically than in the later Neoplatonic commentary.' Sharples 1983, 15, has also remarked this doctrinal independence by arguing that Themistius, together with Alexander of Aphrodisias, represent a relatively orthodox form of exegesis that was capable of putting together a reading of Aristotle without relying on Neoplatonism.

<sup>12</sup> Schroeder & Todd 1990, 37.

this article is that Themistius taught that this precursory relation or *prodromic* interaction is a feature of human cognitive processes upheld by Aristotle, Theophrastus and Plato alike, the latter being the main source of the doctrine in question, especially in his dialogue *Timaeus*. As I intend to argue, this prodromic relationship rests on a hylomorphic view in which each consecutive cognitive function not only actualizes the former function, but also perfects it. In this progressive sequence, the agent intellect would actualize and perfect the potential intellect as it proceeds to its own actuality. As I will show, the thesis finds important textual support in Themistius' discussion about the existence of a passive intellect (παθητικὸς νοῦς; 107. 8), or common intellect (κοινὸς νοῦς; 108. 30), as he calls it, that would provide a bridge connecting a self-standing intellect (both the agent *and* the potential) to the lesser cognitive functions. In my opinion, Themistius' proposal is Aristotelian. There is no room to think of his *In de An.* as depending on Neoplatonism.

## 12.2 Hylomorphism in the *Paraphrase*

One of the many references made by Themistius to the *Ti.*<sup>13</sup> is the passage where Plato deals with the nature of the human intellect and its relation to the rest of the soul's capacities. The passage corresponds to *Ti.* 69c5-e4, from which Themistius quotes in a rather selective way, but faithfully enough to see Plato's point:

When they had taken over an immortal principle of soul, they next fashioned for it a mortal body by framing a globe around it, *building on another kind of soul that was mortal*, and that had in itself terrible and necessary affections: first, pleasure, the strongest lure of evil; next, pains that flee from good; and also boldness and fear, two foolish counselors; spirit hard to entreat, and hope too easily led astray. These they blended together with irrational sense and desire that shrinks from no venture, and so compounded the mortal part of the soul. And in awe of polluting the divine part on account of all these, except insofar as was altogether necessary, they housed the mortal part apart from it, building between head and breast, as an isthmus and boundary, the neck, which they placed between to keep the two apart. In the breast, then, and the trunk (as it is called) they fastened the mortal kind of soul.<sup>14</sup>

In commenting on Aristotle's *de An.* 3.5. 430a10–14, Themistius, 98. 12, advances the thesis that when natural capacities are actualized in their functions, the potential item or faculty is not only actualized, but also perfected. Indeed, as Themistius says, every natural thing that comes into existence has its potentiality in advance and its perfection as a later consequence.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the human intellect, Themistius argues, is a natural substance in which the potential intellect is *perfected* by the actual intellect and not only actualized by it. Since Themistius assumes that nothing can be perfected by itself but only by something else, there is need to affirm

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Todd, 1996, 244.

<sup>14</sup> Italics are mine. The translation is given by Todd, 1996, based on Cornford's translation of 1937.

<sup>15</sup> As usual, I refer to Themistius' *in de An.* by citing the page and line number as printed in Heinze's edition of the Greek text (see Heinze 1890).

the existence of a productive or agent human intellect, as Aristotle did in his *DA* 3.5. 430a13–14, when stating ‘for it is necessary that these differences exist in the soul too.’ Themistius then makes clear why the productive and actual intellect is perfect and not potential at all, and he asserts that its actual perfection is not due to natural adaptation (εὐφυΐα). By going beyond Aristotle’s text while remaining nonetheless in agreement with it, Themistius is attempting to exclude the idea that the actual intellect is the result of another actualization, by culture or by the arrangement between culture and nature. The productive intellect is in actuality by itself, even when entering and pervading the potential intellect to complete it and perfect it.<sup>16</sup>

Hylomorphism comes to the fore when Themistius summarizes his explanation of actuality and perfection of the agent intellect by means of an image: intellectual actualization is said to take place in a way akin to the production of a statue or a house. Themistius’ words are reminiscent of the likely account (λόγος εἰκός) of Plato’s *Timaeus*,<sup>17</sup> where an existing Form is mediated by the artisan production of a divine craft.

A potential house and a potential statue (i.e. stones and bronze) could not receive the structure of a house or that of a statue unless a craft (...) brought the house and statue to completion as compounds (98. 24–28; transl. Todd)

The analogy accomplishes its aim because the agent intellect moves the potential intellect as the craft moves matter, and thus the actual intellect ‘perfects the soul’s natural disposition for thinking, and fully constitutes its ἔξις’ (98. 32–33; transl. Todd). According to Themistius, this actual intellect is that which Aristotle calls ‘separate, unaffected and unmixed’ (*de An.* 3.5. 430a17–18), for it is rather the potential intellect which is more naturally cognate (συμφυής) with the human soul. In *In de An.* 105. 34, Themistius confirms his view: the active intellect is more separate and more unaffected than the potential intellect. But when Themistius emphasizes Aristotle’s qualification of the actual intellect, the question arises as to how an unmixed and unaffected substance can move the potential intellect. According to Themistius, Aristotle will use the example of light and colors to explain this difficult issue, because the actual intellect not only actualizes the potential intellect, but also its contents, i.e. it constitutes its potential objects as actual objects. Potential objects are thoughts, i.e. enmattered forms, universal concepts grasped from objects of perception. Without actualization, Themistius suggests, the potential intellect cannot distinguish universal thoughts, or make relations and transitions from one concept to another or combine and divide them. The potential intellect is as storehouse of thoughts (θησαυρὸς νοημάτων; 99. 6), and it works as a matter from which something is produced. Here are the imprints of sense perception and imagination through the agency of memory. ‘But when the productive intellect’, says Themistius, ‘encounters it and takes over this ‘matter’ of thoughts, the potential intellect becomes

<sup>16</sup>Throughout Themistius’ *Paraphrase*, the passage of *DA* 1.4. 408b18–30 is very important and significant; here, Themistius seems to have this passage in mind.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. *Ti.* 29b, 30b, 48d, 53d, 55d, 56a, 57d, 90e. See also 29d, 59c, 68d.



one with it, and becomes able to make transitions, and to combine and divide thoughts, and to observe thoughts from [the perspective of] one another' (99. 8–10).

The productive nature of the actual intellect is now clear in Themistius' words as he suggests that a craft stands to its matter as the agent intellect to its patient counterpart:

'So the status that a craft has in relation to its matter is the same that the productive intellect has to the potential intellect, and in this way the latter becomes all things, while the former produces all things'. (99. 11–12)

This hylomorphic clue to understand the nature of the human intellect in Aristotle's *de An.* 3.5, works its way through Themistius' *In de An.*, which focuses on the property of being separate, for Aristotle holds that intellect is 'separate, unaffected and unmixed' (*de An.* 3.5. 430a 17–18). Themistius thinks that the so-called agent or productive intellect is separate, for it can take over the potential matter of thoughts as if this active intellect were the owner and the founder of these thoughts and their structure (ἀρχηγὸς τῶν νοημάτων: 99. 23). In this sense, Themistius teaches us that the agent intellect resembles God, for God is also identical with its objects, namely, the things that exist. The parallel is not an exact one, however (as Themistius himself acknowledges), since God is also the supplier of everything that exists (τὰ ὄντα).

### 12.3 The Self and the Passive Intellect

Prodromic hylomorphism is able to show how a form can perfect another that is less separate and perfect than the one that perfects it. Once Themistius has stated what human intellect is, he analyzes its relationship both to the individual and to God. Concerning the individual man, since in any hylomorphic compound there is a difference between to-be-something (τὸ τόδε) and what-it-is-to-be-something (τὸ τῷδε εἶναι),<sup>18</sup> the distinction will also hold of any particular human being. But this raises in turn the question of whether we are the actual intellect or rather the passive one. According to Themistius, the active intellect corresponds to 'what it is to be something', and so 'what it is to be something' flows from the actual intellect. Now, in any concrete human nature the self is 'what-it-is-to-be-me'. Therefore, there is an individual active intellect and that is (precisely) the self that I am. Accordingly, in this crucial moment of his noetics, Themistius (103. 4–5) asserts the existence of an individual active intellect and an individual activity of self-realization. In other terms, he suggests that the dynamic of our individual rational nature is the self-realization of 'what it is to be me', and that this self-realization process is governed by the actual intellect. Moreover, he is eloquent in stating that we *are* the productive intellect itself (100. 37).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *In de An.* 96, 8. Themistius here mentions 'what is to be water' and distinguishes it from 'being water'.

Unlike Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius (102. 30–103. 19) maintains that the actual intellect is different from God, and he quotes Aristotle in support of his view: ‘It is necessary that these differences [*sc.* those that hold between the active and the potential intellect] exist in the soul too’ (*de An.* 3.5. 430a13–14). Thus, as Todd, 1990, 39, makes it clear, Themistian noetics may leave the Aristotelian God immune from any association with the human intellect.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Themistius favors not only an active intellect separate from both natural states and the grip of culture, but he also defends that the patient intellect is separated and unaffected, for it remains no less unmixed with the body than its active counterpart. Themistius 104. 23, quotes Aristotle (*de An.* 3.4. 429a24–26) to confirm the original source of his doctrine: “This is why it is reasonable for [this intellect] not to be mixed with the body, [...] and not have an organ as does the capacity for perception.” Themistius underpins his exegesis by citing *de An.* 3.4. 429a15–16, where Aristotle rejects the existence of any physical feature belonging to the intellect as such.

However, a further confirmation of this tenet can be found in the text: according to Themistius (105. 13) Aristotle also distinguishes (in *de An.* 3.5. 430a25) the potential intellect from the passive (παθητικός) and perishable (φθαρτός) one. To be sure, Themistius draws even a further distinction between potential (δυνάμει) and passive (παθητικός) intellect, and maintains (105. 13) that the perishable intellect is the passive intellect, not the potential one:

While the common [intellect] [ὁ κοινός] is perishable [φθαρτός], passive [παθητικός], and inseparable from and mixed with the body, the potential [intellect] [ὁ δυνάμει] is unaffected, unmixed with the body, and separate (for he says this of it explicitly). (Todd transl. 105. 28–30)

To spell out his position, Themistius introduces the doctrine of ‘psychological precursor states,’ which I take to be a far more precise denomination than a doctrine of three intellects. He declares that the patient intellect is the ‘precursor’ of the actual intellect. It is at this moment that the problem of separation calls for clarification again, since it turns into the question of how what is separate and unmixed can act upon (and be acted upon by) sensible and particular objects of experience and sensation.

According to Themistius, since Aristotle has also conceived of the human intellect as being separate, the means to share in the other sensible and non-separate functions of the human soul must be made available to it. In order to achieve this all-important goal (Themistius says), Aristotle introduced the passive or common intellect in *de An.* 3.4. 429a24–25, which roughly corresponds to the rational affections of the human soul. Accordingly, the psychological prodromic doctrine is stated now in full, as follows:<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also Schroeder & Todd 1990, 32, n. 107.

<sup>20</sup> In this diagram, upper intellectual regions have been eliminated to focus on our topic. However, it is worth knowing that Themistius incorporates into this division, in the upper side, God, and he interprets his action as the guarantor of human reasoning. In this respect, Schroeder and Todd 1990, 39, helpfully remark: ‘Themistius’ notion of a collective noetic self-preserved the essentials

Actual intellect: separate.

Potential intellect: separate.

Passive intellect: non separate.

Imagination: non separate.

Potential intellect is separate, but less separate than actual intellect is. Passive intellect, in turn, is wholly non separate, but can interact nevertheless with the potential intellect, presumably to provide it with intentional contents. Perhaps the most eloquent reference to this prodromic interaction is given by Themistius in 100.28–35:

thus ‘what it is to be me’ comes from the soul, yet from it not in its totality –not, that is, from the capacity for perception, which is matter for the imagination, nor again from the capacity for imagination, which is matter for the potential intellect, nor from the potential intellect, which is matter for the productive intellect. What it is to be me therefore comes from the productive intellect alone, since this alone is form in a precise sense, and indeed this is ‘a form of forms’,<sup>21</sup> and the other <forms> are substrates as well as forms, and nature progressed (προήει) by using them as forms for less valuable <substrates>, and as matter for more valuable <forms> (Todd 1996, transl.)

When Themistius (107.18–29) asserts that Plato recognized the existence of a common intellect in the human soul (in *Tim.* 69c5–e4, passage quoted above), and that he takes it as perishable, he makes explicit the exegetical importance of his doctrinal sources to interpret prodromic hylomorphism in Aristotle’s *de An.* Hence, it makes sense to suppose that Themistius’ prodromic psychology has a Platonic background and relates to Plato’s recognition of a common intellect as a bridge between the immaterial world of intellect and the sensible world of imagination and perception. This would explain the fact that Neoplatonic sources, as is clearly the case of Plotinus, incorporated such a model to account for the difficult issue of connecting the human intellect with sensible things. But more importantly, Themistius recognizes that this mortal part of the human soul is both affected by sensible things and suffers terrible passions stirred by pleasure and fear, while remaining all along able to submit to reason and intellectual precepts. According to Themistius, the common intellect is (for Plato and Aristotle alike), the rational core of the human passions, which can thus be related to the separate intellect (be it the less separate or potential, or the fully separate and actual), in a prodromic interaction.

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of the Alexandrian identification of the productive intellect and God, insofar as that doctrine identifies a form of self-transcendence. He makes the productive intellect in effect a ‘second God’ in contrast with the ‘first God’ (cf. 102.31, 36; 103.10) that he argues cannot be intended by the intellect introduced in *De Anima* 3.5 [...] The Themistian noetic may, therefore, leave the Aristotelian God immune from any association with human intellection, but it still assigns such reasoning its own supra-human realm. Themistius may have resisted contemporary trends towards a systematic Neoplatonic reading of the *De Anima*, but his misguided exegesis still located Aristotle’s account of the intellect in the context of an albeit more modest metaphysical hierarchy and rather less elaborate process of self-realization.’

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle in *de An.* 3.8. 432a3, refers to the human intellect as the form of all forms: εἶδος εἰδῶν.

The evidence suggests that there must be a reason why the intellectual precepts can be understood by the individual when acting in agreement with reason. Besides, it can be observed (to lend some support to Themistius' exegesis), that Plato and Aristotle did not reason in different ways, when Plato (*R.* 4.442d) and Aristotle (*de An.* 3.10. 433b5–10), recognized that intellectual commands *can* drive us away from desire. However, Themistius prefers to remind us that Zeno the Stoic and his school were not wrong in taking the affections of the human soul to be 'perversions of reason' (διαστροφᾶς τοῦ λόγου), i.e. 'mistaken judgments of reason' (λόγου κρίσεις ἡμαρτημένα; *In de An.* 107. 18), for Zeno was also referring to what Plato calls the rational affections and Aristotle the passive intellect (or so Themistius argues).

Further, Themistius thinks that his explanation of Aristotle's *de An.* is also shared by the Aristotelian school, and he confirms his opinion by referring to Theophrastus. In fact, he reports (105. 30–108. 35) that Theophrastus wonders how the human intellect finds itself in spontaneous agreement with the body and is naturally akin to it, if it comes from outside as a separate substance added to the body. The answer, which Themistius extends to Aristotle himself and the whole of the Peripatetic school,<sup>22</sup> is that the common intellect is inseparable from the body. This helps explain the psychological modification or alteration disturbing whoever reasons, as well as the all too usual instances of oblivion, falsehood and confusion. According to Themistius' reports (108. 28–31), Theophrastus also held the intellect to be one or two (where the disjunction seems not to be an exclusive one): there are two if the passive and the active intellect are distinguished from one another, but the intellect is one in fact, because everything which is combined of matter and form is one (108. 32–34).

In the final paragraph (108. 35–109. 3), Themistius reflects on the role of his sources by stressing that it was he who conceived his fairly idiosyncratic exegesis of the human intellect without relying on an earlier source. However, this does not prevent him from recognizing his debt to Theophrastus and Plato:

But, as I have said, making claims about what philosophers believe involves special study and reflection. Still, it does seem perhaps relevant to insist that someone could best understand the insight of Aristotle and Theophrastus on these < matters >, indeed perhaps also that of Plato himself, from the passages that we have gathered. (Todd 1996, transl.)

As I take it, Themistius is referring to his own doctrine on human intellect, which stems from Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus. He also suggests that he has selected those authors who have discussed this particular point, allowing their own quoted passages to bear witness to their respective positions. The doctrine referred to is none other than the *prodromic* interpretation of the Aristotelianhylomorphic psychology, as I have sketched it above.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Themistius reports the issue by using the third-person plural verb. Cf. *In de An.* 108. 14: λέγουσι.

## 12.4 The Role of *Timaeus* 69c5-e4 in Themistius' Noetics

The prodromic interpretation of Aristotelian hylomorphic noetics can be linked to Plotinian noetics.<sup>23</sup> But it would be a big stretch to affirm from here that Themistius is merely following Plotinus or any other Neoplatonic sources on this topic.<sup>24</sup> The truth seems to lie on the other side of the spectrum: it is Plato's *Timaeus* 69c5-e4 (and Aristotle's adaptation of that teaching) that influenced Plotinus and the entire Neoplatonic tradition. In point of fact, Plotinus' acquaintance with the Aristotelian corpus and the Peripatetic school is well known.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, recent research on Plotinus' noetics (especially on his double action doctrine), carried out by Emilsson, has highlighted its Aristotelian provenance and its subsequent interpretative use by Plotinus.<sup>26</sup>

If this is so, to claim Themistius' direct dependence upon Neoplatonic authors (either Plotinus or Porphyry) seems all the more unlikely. The doubt arises as to whether Themistius can be taken to imply that Plato, Theophrastus and Aristotle, on the one side, came close to the sense of *de An.* 3.5; while the Stoic Zeno and the hitherto unnamed Alexander of Aphrodisias, on the other, offered different interpretations. Thus, Themistius would be offering a reading of *de An.* 3.5 that neither follows Plotinus' *per se*, nor Alexander, nor even the Stoic school, but rather accords only to his own original exegesis, which relies on a prodromic interaction of the psychological faculties.

Themistius might be completing his course notes on *de An.* 3.5 by teaching the differences between his own exegesis and the rival alternatives. The first interpretation he rejects (attributed to the Stoic Zeno) rightly recognizes the common intellect and grounds the human passions there; however, to conceive human passions as perversions of reason is to turn the problem upside down by reducing the lower psychological function to a bodily-mixed intellect. This move commits one to defining every other less valuable psychological function as a mere perversion or adaptation of the intellect, which is substance. As I take it, Zeno could be advancing a view similar to the one advocated by Origen of Alexandria in his *De Principiis* II. 8. 3–4, namely, whether the Greek word ψυχή comes from ψυχρός, and so whether every

<sup>23</sup> Blumenthal 1990, 120, has recalled that 'The most obvious Neoplatonic-looking part of Themistius' discussion is that in which he talks about successive faculties of soul being related to those below them in each case as form to matter (100, 32–5).' Todd, 1990, 109, n. 138, calls attention to the expression προδρόμοι ἐλλάμψεις in Plotinus 6.7 [38]. 7.12. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Blumenthal, 1990, 123, wrote: 'Thus both the content of Themistius' work, and such evidence as we have of the commentators' attitudes to him, show that he was predominantly Peripatetic.' See also Todd 1990, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Sharples 1990, 84: 'We are after all explicitly told that Alexander's commentaries were among those read in Plotinus's school' (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 14). See Hadot 1990, 125–140; cf. also Todd 1976, 20.

<sup>26</sup> See Emilsson 2007, 52. As I take it, the doctrine of double action is the internal logic of the prodromic interaction that I have remarked here.

soul is a cold intellect.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Themistius would be suggesting that Alexander of Aphrodisias also stands in need of correction, since he failed to distinguish the παθητικὸς νοῦς from the δυνάμει νοῦς (in *DA* 3.5. 430a24–25), a mistake which constrains him to a wrong interpretation of Aristotle, in which the human intellect is identified with God.

Finally, I would like to stress the role that Plato's *Ti.* 69c5-e4 plays in the original view of the *In de An.*: namely, it seems to be the genuine inspiration for the general drift of Themistius' noetics. This would explain the central presence of two central terms that come from the *Ti.*: δημιουργία (in *de An.* 99. 19) and δημιουργεῖν (99. 25). By these terms, Themistius refers to the creativity that is proper to the human active intellect. Moreover, there is need to reflect on the further fact that the *Ti.* notoriously contains a doctrine of mixture (μίξις). It is no less important that Themistius mentions the term (102. 29 and 108. 28) in connection with Theophrastus' view about confusion and oblivion, which he took to arise out of the mixture of the passive intellect with the separate one. Thus, in his *In de An.* of Aristotle's *de An.* 3.5, Themistius supports my view that *Timaeus*' philosophical experience of mediation could be the source of the later Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Stoic systematic accounts of the interaction between the human intellect and the lower psychological functions.

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<sup>27</sup> I call attention to Tertullian's discussion about how the intellect comes to the body (in *De anima* 25.6), where he provides the example of a red-hot iron that is partially submerged in water. Here, the intellect is identified to the still red-hot iron and the soul to the already cold iron. Origen does not disapprove of this interpretation, insofar as it turns man into a fallen intellect, even if in the end he does not fully endorse it.

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